

WEEP NO MORE, MY ROBOT *by* Chester S. Geier

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BACK
COVER

AMAZING STORIES



JUNE 25¢
IN CANADA 30¢

THOUGHT RECORDS OF LEMURIA

By RICHARD S. SHAVER

VOLUME 19
NUMBER 1
AMAZING STORIES
JUNE 1948



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All he had to do was to turn a valve and a city would be poisoned—and he'd be a traitor and outcast.

I'LL BE FLEECE (Novelet—12,000) . . . By Berkeley Livingston 164

Illustrated by Red Ruth

Jason went seeking the golden fleece and when he had it, made a coat of it—to be worn in 1945!

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Front cover painting by Robert Gibson Jones illustrating a scene from "Thought Records of Lemuria"
Back cover painting by James B. Settles illustrating "Mica Sailboat of Mercury"

AMAZING
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JUNE
1945

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Volume 19
Number 2

The OBSERVATORY

..... by the Editor

YOUR editor, it seems, has made a mistake. When Mr. Richard S. Shaver sent in his first story, we didn't believe Mr. Shaver's explanation of where he got it, and because we didn't want to look silly we figured out a "very good" source. We called his story "racial memory." We had good reason to call it that, and many of our readers did exactly what we wanted them to—they believed in the story as such. And thereby hangs our head! Now we do feel silly. We're right back to Mr. Shaver's original statement, and this time we're forced to use it—because a tremendous flood of letters from our readers has served to convince us Mr. Shaver wasn't kidding us about his source.

ALL of which means that we here and now admit that we took a liberty upon ourselves that we had no right to when we called Mr. Shaver's "I Remember Lemuria!" a "racial memory." Even the title was ours—Mr. Shaver called his story "Warning to Future Man." And with his newest story, "Thought Records Of Lemuria," in this issue, we present the truth as Mr. Shaver has told it to us. "I Remember Lemuria!" was not a racial memory, but a *thought record!*



"Stop! You're tickling me!"

In order to understand what that is, you'll have to read the story that begins on page 16.

"THOUGHT Records Of Lemuria" is the story of Mr. Shaver's amazing experience with the underground race of people called (variously) dero, tero and zero (or just "ray"). Ray, because that is how he contacted them by "rays" of various types, rays manipulated by them, not by him. Actually they are just as human as we, and are, as we, descendants of the "abandoned" or those humans who were abandoned to their fate here on Earth 12,000 years ago by the Atlans and Titans. We have a great deal to tell you about Lemuria and the amazing developments that have come because of publication of Mr. Shaver's first story, but before we get all mixed up in a maze of the most incredible statements we've ever made or had made to us let's take a peek at the other features in this issue, very briefly:

CHESTER S. GEIER has given us a new robot story, this one with a real wallop in it, perhaps the biggest since "I, Robot" by Asimov, the first of the Adam Link stories. "Weep No More, My Robot" is one of those stories you won't forget in a hurry!

FRANCES M. DEEGAN is a woman, and very few women have written good science-fiction—but she's one of the very few. We'd even go so far as to say she's one of the very *finest*, and that includes the males, too! We've got to have that statement not only on the story published in this issue, "The Radiant Rock," but on others she's sold us since. Already she has made a terrific hit in our companion magazine, *Mossmoth Mystery*, and we think she'll repeat in all of our magazines—and she'll be in all of 'em, take it from us! But to get back to the story in this issue, you're due for some laughs, plus a few other emotions. We won't tip you off any further, but prepare for a treat!

"I'll Be Fleeced," says Berkeley Livingston, and for 12,000 words that's exactly what happens to the character in his latest story—but in a way to which that gentle art has not been practiced up to
(Continued on page 8)

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The OBSERVATORY

..... by the Editor

(Continued from page 6)

now! Remember Jason's golden fleece? Well, if you'll also recall he had a coat made of it... That coat would be a nice thing to own, you say? Okay, put down your money and read—but don't expect to win your bet.

FLASH, flash, bang! Nope, this isn't Walter Winchell announcing another scoop—it's just Edmond Hamilton "ole world-wrecker!" back in the groove again! Say, hasn't it been a long time since good old Ed graced our contents page, though! It is a terrific pleasure to us to be able to announce his return with a yarn that'll curl your toes with delight. "Invaders From the Monster World." Ha! Didn't we tell you? The title ought to be enough—here's your old favorite with a grand new yarn, just the type story that made his reputation what it is today.

NEXT comes Don Wilcox with a return to his old mastery such as "The Earth Stealers" established with a brand new one called "The Scarlet Swordsmen." It would be a sin and a shame to give you one single hint as to what the story's about that isn't told in the title—so our mouth's shut; and you'll thank us for not spoiling your fun.

LASTLY, William Lawrence Hamling gives us out with "Peril From the Outlands" which is a new twist interplanetary that ought to please so end. The lad's a capable boy, and he knows how to sling the words (and lead) around.

NEWS has come to us that David Wright O'Brien, bombardier on a B-17, has been missing in action over Germany since December 11, 1944. We're sitting here now, holding thumbs for the best damn writer we've got, and we'll let you know when word comes out of Germany—which ought to be soon, if the Russians have their way.

ADDED bad news is the information that Dave's lifelong buddy, and our own writer pal, William P. McGovern has been wounded in the fighting in Italy. We're waiting to hear from Bill, who it is reported, is perfectly able to write his own letters.

A BIT of better news is the recent visit of Arthur T. Harris, while on furlough following his discharge from the hospital. Arthur got his on Ascension Island, and was operated on in Brazil before being sent to an American hospital. But thanks to the medics, he is as good as new again.

He wrote a few paragraphs for us (which are reproduced here):

"It is my personal belief that science fiction's discovery of the super-tank, the robot bomb, the remote control airplane exterminator, and certain esoteric advancements in chemical warfare can scarcely be undervalued.

"As readers will recall, my activities during World War I, particularly in the fields of counter-espionage and cryptanalysis, prepared the way for the services I am now rendering the War Department.

"In pursuit of my wartime endeavors I have traveled the length and breadth of South America and have witnessed the amazing growth of our well-equipped air bases.

"Shortly I expect assignment in either China or the European theater. Meanwhile, all the best to my patient readers of my lousy stories!" (Ed—Art, your modesty is touching, but you're all wet about those stories being lousy!)

WE AREN'T sure about this, but James Norman, author of that popular little Martian detective, Oscar, dropped into our office and when we asked him when he was due to go overseas, answered vaguely that he didn't know—and the following Sunday we heard his voice on a radio program and according to the announcer his initials were James Norman, and also according to both of them, he was quite a hero, having wiped out numerous Japs and had medals from here to there, and wounds! Such modesty—or are there two people in the world with that absolutely unique voice! We doubt. Can any of our readers confirm this? We'd like to give due credit to our writers for braving something beside your editor's sometimes inane criticism.

NOW let's get back to Lemuria! First, never in its whole history of nineteen years of continuous publication has **AMAZING STORIES** received such a flood of fan mail from its readers. Nor has any editor ever seen fan mail such as this! Literally true, readers, some of those letters were 5,000 words long! Longer than some of our stories! In fact, one letter totaled thirty-four typewritten pages! That means one thing, of course—the story was a hit. But it means another in this particular case, an amazing thing, because most of the letters were not praising the story as a story, but supporting it as a fact (or, to be sure, condemning it violently as a fiction). On all sides there were letter "shouts" of IT'S TRUE or IT'S A LIE. No half-way opinions, except those letters which simply expressed curiosity, a natural reaction to a presumably fiction story which the editor and author claim is not a fiction story.

RIGHT now, however, we've got to admit to still another mistake. When we edited this story, we forgot an important thing; that not all our readers have been reading science fiction all their lives, and that not all of them are scientists—thus we went far over many readers' heads. For

(Continued on page 10)

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The DISCUSSATORY by the Editor

(Continued from page 8)

instance, we forgot that there might be people who wouldn't automatically know that Lemuria and Mu are synonymous, that Mu is a contraction of Lemuria. We forgot that many of you just would be confused by so many new terms such as "cad," "technicons," "mech," "abandondero," etc., etc. In short, the story was hard to read. Well, we've tried to correct that in the new story, and you'll find it much more exciting, simply told, and more completely explained. You'll find that where we had "technicon" or "medicon" or some such term in the first story, we now translate to "technician" and "medical man" or "doctor," or even "scientific physician." Also, we've added a great deal more to the story that is admittedly fiction. After all, we are publishing a magazine of entertainment, and a magazine of fiction. Thus, the *best* only of this and future stories, is technical, the story is constructed mainly to entertain. However, we have detracted not one single whit from the "facts" that Mr. Shaver's original manuscript might have contained, nor have we distorted or changed meanings.

LET'S try to summarize a few things before we discuss them. According to letters from readers:

1. Mr. Shaver is not the only man who remembers Lemuria.

2. When we hit upon the "clever" idea of calling this story "racial memory," we hit upon another weird thing that our readers testify to, in rather unscientifically proven ways, to be sure, but as to that you can scan their letters yourself in the Discussions column.

3. The Titans and Atlans did fight a great battle 12,000 years ago against an "evil one" after which an exodus took place.

4. The Earth was populated by the Atlans and Titans for at least 150,000 years prior to the exodus to a safer planet.

5. The "language of Lemuria" presented by Mr. Shaver is no myth, that it does provide a common basis for all languages, and that several present-day people not only "remember" it, but speak it!

6. That the telonium plates buried by Mutan Mon have been discovered!

7. That the underground cities of Lemuria are not unknown!

8. That literally thousands of people exist today who have a varied amount of knowledge of the amazing things revealed in Mr. Shaver's story.

9. That the sun is the cause of old age.

10. That gravity is a push, and not a pull.

11. That mankind does know about the "dero" people living now in the caves, and is tormented by them.

12. That "lycophants" of these dero peoples roam the surface of the earth and perform their dirty work for them—and that *your editor's life has been threatened for publishing this story*, and that he has been enjoined from publishing more! The reason given being that we will unwittingly reveal secrets that may well prove to be disastrous if seized upon by the wrong men.

13. That no matter how much fiction either Shaver or ourselves introduced into the magazine story, *part* of it is basically true and has a tremendous significance which is far-reaching.

READERS, we realize that those thirteen points are staggering statements, and that the scientific world will challenge us to offer proof or retract them; that you, the readers, will do the same. Well, take it from us, we are as anxious to prove them as anyone. In fact, if we can prove just one of the points, it will rate us headlines that would crowd the war right into the comic section of every daily in the world! All we can say about that is "we are from Missouri" and by heaven, we're going to demand proof.

FIRST, however, let's analyze our present sources of information. Legally, any court in the land would say "hearsay" and dismiss the evidence as immaterial. Scientifically, any scientist would snort and say "show me just one little actual gadget!" And certainly both would be right. Because our source of information is simply a flood of letters from our readers who proceed to out-Shaver Mr. Shaver and make statements even more incredible with their bare faces hanging out.

AND yet, some of them make statements that are so definite that they will have to produce facts or immediately back down. They did not hedge, they came right out and said such things as (one instance) a telegram that read: IMPERISHABLE TELONIUM PLATE NOT UNDISCOVERED. LETTER FOLLOWS. And another letter which says "Plates are in possession of (we delete a few words) at (name of place)." Sure, we're checking! We're on the hunt with our tongues hanging out! But like any normal doubting Thomas, we're anticipating failure—because it's so damned incredible!

YOUR editor intends to answer every letter we got, personally, and dig, dig, dig, until he runs every one of these incredible statements to earth. But we can't do it alone—so we're enlisting the help of detective agencies; of reputable scientists (You don't know how hard it is to get an audience with a reputable scientist with a subject like this, and how exceedingly harder it is to get him to spend any time on actual research. Would you, for instance, go digging for the bones of the giant of "Jack and the Beanstalk"?); and of able linguists in the case of the language key. As part of that effort, we are making personal trips to see Mr. Shaver (first) and then to several scientists to whom we happen to have access.

LUCKILY, though, several of our more scientific readers have been impressed, and have offered any help in research we might discover they can handle (within limits). We intend to accept their kind offers.

MOST of all, many of our readers do not need an invitation to help. A great many are compiling dictionaries of words in several languages that seem to make sense in Lemurian, and we expect that a lot of mice already are on centrifuged water and food diets and are being kept in cages into which only purified air is introduced.

BUT, so far, all our information is from you readers, and no matter how sincere your letters have been, none of you have offered that "proof" we need. The only things proved so far are that there is something true about "I Remember Lemuria"; that if it is a delusion, many people have it, that there is an extreme readiness to accept calmly as true such "unscientific statements as "gravity is a push"; the "sun causes age"; the "ovies exist"; "Titans were on Earth for thousands of centuries"; that they "still exist."

WHEN we quoted from the Bible that "In those days there were giants in the earth; and after that," we started a flood of quotations both for and against us—which led us to re-read the Bible more closely, with Shaver's story as a parallel, and we found things we never saw before. The Bible, it seems, tells things remarkably similar, and goes even further, even more unbelievably fantastic. Naturally, this is an arguable subject, and one that diplomatic persons steer clear of making the subject for any discussion; but just the same your editor is amazed at the description, for instance, of a "jet-propulsion, four-passenger, plane with four wings, retractable landing gear, transparent cowling, loud-speaker public address system, illuminated cockpits, and transparent metal motors affixed to propellers for travel in atmosphere" in the first chapter of Ezekiel; and of another narration of the destruction of Babylon by two million fighter rocket planes equipped with rapid-fire incendiary guns in the wings! Also the literally hundreds of references to a "new Jerusalem in the heavens" where the water of "life" is the most enticing bait put out to cause people to come to it to live.

WE CONFESS, however, that we got letters from readers who would possibly beat us up if they could get their hands on us. Just why, we can't imagine—but they were hot. Somehow we treaded on their toes. We outraged their sense of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood; for which we sincerely apologize. The amazing thing is that they reacted so violently, because after all, this is a fiction magazine—we must have been convincing at least. It is a necessary part of story-telling to create as realistic an illusion as possible. Thus,

such comments from readers are perhaps more flattering than just ordinary praise.

ALONG that line of reasoning, we intend to try to keep the illusion of reality at a high pitch in every story we publish. Movies are good we say because they are "real." You can actually see the characters and the action. It is harder to convince a reader of reality with nothing more than printed words and static illustrations.

AND yet, we insist, maybe all this is true—and we intend to try to find out. To this end, we make a rather unique appeal: The editors of this magazine are intensely interested in hearing from people who "hear voices" or "just know" things in line with these Lemuria stories, even if those who hear voices are inmates of an insane asylum. We want to know what the voices say, and none of those who tell us that need even sign their name. Their identity is not the thing; but we have received information that we are not revealing—yet, and a correlation of hundreds of such statements may be of vital importance. At least, it is a scientific experiment, and may prove or disprove something many of our readers have said. So, when we ask you "do you hear voices," don't think we're batty. If you don't, just forget it. If you do, please tell us what the voices say. We admit we'd like to know your name and address, so we could correspond privately, but this is emphatically not needed. Which ends this editorial; but much more concerning readers' reports is in a special section in this book—pages 188 to 193 inclusive—and will remain a feature in future issues. Keep posted there! *Rap.*



"It's incompatibility—your honor"

Open Letter to the World

January 18, 1945

To My Fellow Men:

I, Richard Shaver, want your attention. I must get to you somewhat of the knowledge I have gained in strange ways; so that the mighty hidden wisdom I have unearthed does not perish with me, but becomes instead a part of the general living mind of man. If you have intelligence you will read between the lines of my writings of what may seem at first glance to be the wildest fiction, and find certain immediately useful information as well as the answers to age-old puzzles such as apparently occult and spiritual phenomena; things men fear to speak of but know are true; terrible agonies; hidden and secret pleasures spoken of only as "forbidden fruit"; ways of life that powerful and often foolish social and religious organizations have hidden since earliest times because of a worm-like fear of things they could not quite understand.

Such students will be able to read between the lines of my stories and in their minds build a true picture of the life-that-was in ancient, unwritten-of days. They will realize that I have indeed fathomed many a great lost secret of power such as the medieval sorcerers who, for fear of being burned at the stake, wrote of in obscure codes. Even you who read this tale as fiction will assuredly sense within yourselves the stirring of something that will whisper and call to you to seek further.

The things of which I write will be touched upon in literature more and more frequently in the future by students who realize that mankind should be awakened, even if rudely, to the realities underlying surface life; since those realities wield more influence upon earth people than is generally known, even to the average student of secret things.

Abraham Merritt, in "The Snake Mother," "The Face In The Abyss", "The Moon Pool" and other of his tales, has given those of us who know and seek for more information of the hidden ways of life, some of the secrets of

the antique mechanisms and their hidden places of concealment. Yet I think he did not know that these caverns lie in a great network under all of earth's surface and are actually still inhabited by wretched descendants of the Ancient Ones. His books betray to me certain lacks in his information which I will attempt to make up for the sake of those who seek the truth about these ancient, unspoken-of remnants of the vast super-science so ably described as the property of the Snake Mother.

For instance, in "The Snake Mother," Lantlu and his followers are evil, but retain their beauty and a certain cleverness as well as the method of eternal life. But in the actual life in the caverns today, the evil ones are neither beautiful nor clever nor do they live much longer than normal men. The more intelligent, well-meaning members of these cavern people are sometimes as beautiful and all-wise as Merritt's immortals, but although they have some knowledge of the methods of the Ancients to obtain near-immortal existence, they are not able to use the methods effectively because of their constant struggles with the degenerate, evil members of the race.

Among those remnants of the Ancients there has been degeneration to a degree that would seem incredible did not the creatures still exist, living proofs of the efficacy of the ancient generators of beneficial life force. For in no other way than by constant flows of beneficial force from those indestructible mechanisms could such manifestly unfit creatures as the evil members of the life in the caverns continue to exist.

You who read may unwittingly meet one of the less hideous evil beings at any time on the surface. Those who come up from the caves for commercial or less honest reasons are, naturally, of the higher grades among them; for the degenerates are idiotic devils who only to be seen would be recognized as malevolence incarnate.

I will try to tell you something of them, for they everlastingly obstruct and bedevil mankind. It is their chief satisfaction to wreak pain and damage and death upon human beings. It is well to be able to recognize such enemies, for they are possessed of mighty weapons such as surface people have not yet conceived despite the many instruments of destruction fabricated for earth wars. It is ghastly, but perhaps better for surface people in the final analysis, that these horrible beings have no actual brain power that can be used for intellectual pursuits or abstract theorizing; brain in them has been usurped by a continual questing for something to torment, to ray the life out of. They are like leeches in human form, wholly parasitic and destructive.

Merritt knew much of such things and gave it to you. I can add a great deal to what he has told you and I shall do so, nor shall any craven fear of the hidden powers stop me. For in those still existent mechanisms lie many infinitely valuable methods of making life bloom and become a vastly more beautiful and longer-lasting thing than the present treadmill routine of war and work that it is.

I also address myself to those higher beings of the underworld, those who have kept the ancient virtues alive by breeding with stolen women from the surface, and for other reasons are well-intentioned and closer to mankind than the inbred degenerates peopling many of the caves. Such higher beings are as maliciously plagued as we by the idiot beings who hate everything that is noble and beautiful. The need of those kindlier beings for awareness of certain things which I have woven into my work is as great as is the need of surface people for knowledge of their ancient enemies.

Merritt did not make quite clear the fact that the ancient weapons and mechanisms were, many of them, still intact in a great many places on earth. In confining his ancient, still living race to a hidden section of the Andes mountains, he inadvertently concealed the general dispersion of these underground cities. Concealed in monstrous caverns of unbelievable breadth and space, these wondrous works of the ancient God-race are being used by the evil ones whom Merritt concepts as Nimir and Lantlu and his followers, but whom I picture more nearly to the facts of the case as degenerate men with a mind more in tune with such forms of life as a fluke or leech than to man. There are many such, protected from man on the surface by those hidden, inaccessible caverns whose walls are of such impenetrably hardened rock that the finest tools of miners are broken against them. On guard also at the few existent entrances are the ancient weapons whose great range render it impossible for any living thing to approach within a radius of thirty miles unless permitted by the watchers in the caves.

The power of Nimir's evil is not shackled as Merritt would have it in "The Face In The Abyss." On the contrary, it works havoc through its wretched dupes and hereditary morons, obstructing the good that the scattered Wise of the caverns would do for mankind; as well as blocking in subtle, long-practiced and undetected ways the progress of surface science. On both counts the reason for this mischief is not alone the hateful intent of these dero, but their fear lest surface science wakens to their existence and discovers some way of reaching them in the caverns and freeing the planet from their age-old deviltry.

It is a grievous thing to learn how much of beauty and ecstasy life can offer and yet be obliged to live on day after day in the wretched misery which life in modern ways is to one who knows how the Ancients lived. In reading these tales, compare your life with the ancient ways one may learn in the caverns. You surface folk know nothing better than your present circumscribed existence, but I tell you that your lives are imprisoned hells from which modern science could free you overnight if your learned men would so overcome prejudices as to accept the fact of the existence of the ancient science and acquire but one piece of the marvelous mechanisms for study. And here let me add, for open, general study; not that secret abortive study that such ancient science has had in the past.

My strength is dedicated to informing you of the key and the way to the kind of life that produced the beauty and wisdom of those immortal beings of the past, beings whose actual existence has been proved a thousand times to those who, like myself, have had actual experience in the caverns. For we have seen and touched and used those antique mechanisms and we know whereof we speak. But until today, those who knew have feared to broadcast their knowledge, for in olden times it would have meant being burnt at the stake, and today most certainly the insane asylum.

Merritt well knew, as do I, that the Ancients had conquered death. I have set myself to tell you what I know of how they did so; and how plans carried out intelligently and with care can bring victory over death to modern surface men as it did to those Elders of long ago. It is not easy to achieve immortality, but a real start toward eventual success can be made.

I am forced to tell you that the work of such writers as Merritt contains much that is not fiction, but must be presented as fiction because no one would print it in any other form. Thus you readers who have not met the dark and unfathomable life of the hidden pits may take this bit of explanation as an effort to make an incredible story credible; in which case I hope the effort is successful. It is to those of you who either know, or who believe me, that I more significantly address myself.

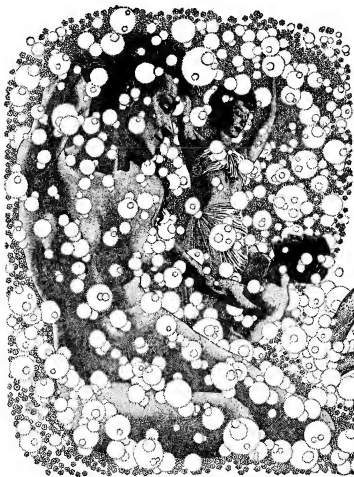
Very sincerely yours,

Richard Stare

This letter is an introduction to the story which begins on the following page. As you read it, please bear in mind that it is presented to entertain

you, and can be accepted as pure fiction, if you wish. But the fact remains, the author believes it is true—and your editor is as impressed as you will be!—Ed.

THOUGHT RECORDS

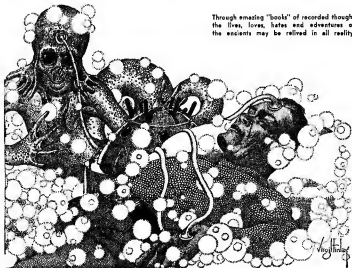


of LEMURIA

By **RICHARD S. SHAVER**

THE editors of this magazine are pleased to present the second "Lemurian" story written by a man who has seen with his own eyes the remnants of the ancient race of Lemuria, and witnessed their still-populated cities hidden deep beneath the surface of the Earth. This second story is intended to answer the challenge of those who wish Mr. Shaver to offer some proof of his source for the first story, "I Remember Lemuria" published in our March issue. Although it is now revealed that Mr. Shaver's source is not racial memory, as mistakenly claimed by your editors, it seems certain that the actual source will be even more unbelievable. In the following pages you will find a story of amazing adventure, and thrills galore, in the true tradition of all science fiction—and yet, we ourselves cannot say that it is entirely fiction. It may even be that when the proofs now being produced are marshaled together, it will be discovered that a great deal of this and the first story (and stories to follow) are true in the most exact sense of the word. Meanwhile, we present this story for your enjoyment, and we welcome your comment. It is something NEW in science fiction!

Through amazing "books" of recorded thought the lives, loves, hates and adventures of the ancients may be relived in all reality.



WHEN the blind girl of the caves turned on the thought record machine, I lived once more the life that was an Earth when the God races settled the planet, and learned their great scientific secrets.

HHEY, Joe Raddatz, bring that dolly over here!"

I glanced up casually from my spot welding, then blinked in puzzlement as my eyes took in the area immediately around me. The voice in my ear had come out of nowhere! No fellow worker in this Detroit auto plant was near enough for his voice to be heard by me!

"What in the devil . . ." I muttered, then shrugged in mystification and turned back to my work.

The moment I snapped the switch on my spot welder the voice came again.

" . . . know damn well this rivet won't fit! Don't tell me I don't know a nine thirty-second hole when I see one . . ." The voice died away, and although I listened intently for a long moment, it didn't come again.

The noon whistle blew and I knocked off. But I didn't get much kick out of eating my lunch. I kept thinking about hearing that voice when no one was around me. Funny thing!

"Wonder who Joe Raddatz is?" I mumbled. I downed the last of my coffee and put the thermos bottle back in the lid of my lunch kit. Then I got to my feet, hitched up my trousers, and went down to the time-keeper's cubby-hole.

"Do me a favor, Clocky?" I asked.

"Sure thing," he grunted. "If it's anything I can do without getting off my fanny."

"It is. I just want to know if there's a Joe Raddatz working on this shift, and where he's located."

Clocky twisted around on his high stool, faced an index on the wall, and ran one finger down the row of cards that were inserted in little slots. "Raddatz—? Unh—yeah, here it is. Sure, Joe Raddatz is on this shift. Works over in section twenty. That'd be down at the far end of the building—he's a riveter."

"Thanks, Clocky," I said, and walked back toward my section. I was frowning and the information I'd just heard was revolving in my brain like a silly pinwheel, getting nowhere.

"Section twenty—" I mumbled, stumbling over a barrel of bronze welding rods. "How could I hear a guy talking over there?"

I thought of acoustics, and pursed my lips. "Yeah, maybe I could, at that." They say there's a spot in the old senate chambers in the Capitol Building where even the faintest whisper can be heard from a spot ninety feet away, and most peculiarly, can be heard at no other point. Acoustics is a funny thing—just the way a building is built can carry sounds and direct them to points where they couldn't ordinarily be heard. Some caves are like that; you can hear a voice a mile away, when it would be inaudible otherwise at a hundred feet.

Thinking about it that way took all the mystery out of it, and I grinned. "Takes a mighty little thing to make a guy think he's dopey!" I said aloud.

I reached my bench and sat down to wait for the whistle to begin work again. By the time it blew I forgot all

about Joe Raddatz and acoustics.

AT TWO o'clock the voice came again. This time it wasn't the voice of Joe Raddatz. It was a new voice, hoarse and gruff; and there were only two words he seemed to be able to fit together coherently. They aren't the kind I'd ordinarily repeat. A moment later I heard other voices—voices of men all up and down the plant, and after an hour I had learned two things: all of the voices came from the side of the plant on which I worked, from one end to the other. I couldn't hear them when I laid my welding gun down. Somehow the two facts were connected.

By nightfall I had figured it out; the voices of the men were those who were near, or in contact with, some machine attached to the wiring system on my side of the building. I couldn't hear any voices at all as long as I didn't have any physical contact with my spot welder.

I think I breathed easier. After all, there was an explanation that I was perfectly willing and able to accept. The wire system, and the machines connected to it, were somehow acting in a telephonic manner, picking up voices, transmitting them through the electrical circuit, and reproducing them in my gun. When I turned the thing in that evening I spoke to the stockroom supervisor.

"Pete, how about sending this in for a repair job—it's out of order."

"What's wrong with it?"

"Gives me a shock," I lied. I figured it was better to say that than go through the rigamarole that would be necessary to explain how I heard voices through it; and the possibility existed that he'd snort and say I was nuts, and I wouldn't get a new gun—and I wanted one. It's nervewracking to have to act like a telephone receiver when you're sup-

posed to concentrate on your work.

A new spot welder didn't do any good. The next day I heard the voices again.

There was only one thing to do—I stuffed my ears with cotton.

And I still heard them!

NOW I began to get a little scared.

I wasn't *hearing* these voices; I was *thinking* them! They were in my mind, soundless, inaudible. Mental telepathy!

Men about me, near or far, saying things, *thinking* things, and I could hear every spoken word or every most secret tboough.

I knew I was receiving the thoughts of some of these men, because, for instance, I heard: "Sure, Mike, you're right about that . . . *Right! If this guy's right, I'll eat his shirt!* . . . you're the boss, we'll do it your way . . . *and nuts to you. After you're down the line I'll do as I damned please! For a foreman, you're the stupidest—*" No workman would talk to his foreman like that.

I heard other things that were more convincing proof that I was hearing thoughts, things that made me blush when I heard them; and I don't blush easy!

Right now, for instance, a guy is thinking about his girl . . . Say, if she thinks he loves her, somebody ought to put her straight! He's a wrong *guy*, but really I ought to tip her off—

Hey, wait a minute, how would I *prove* the truth of my tip?

Dynamite, that's what this is! I'll have to keep my trap shut, or I'll be putting my foot into it. I never realized how had it might be to know what the other guy is thinking, without him being aware, you know.

"Put him on the rack," said a voice.

I snapped off my welder and sat still,

frowning. Something was wrong with that voice, or thought, or whatever it was. Put him on the rack? You don't put people on a rack in an auto plant. Tools, yes, or a lot of other things. Rack? What sort of a rack?

"It'll pull him apart in an hour!" the voice went on with a note of horrible satisfaction in it. "Nice and slow, so he suffers plenty! Put the ben ray on him, so he won't die too quick . . ."

My welding gun clattered to the cement floor. I stood as though frozen. The hair on my head crawled. What was I hearing?

The voice was gone. All around me was only the muted roar of an auto factory—the clanging, clattering, mingling maelstrom of busy machines and busier men. Just noise, no voices.

I LOOKED down at the gun on the floor and I was trembling. What was going on? That voice had been no voice, or thought, of a worker in this plant . . . unless it was the thought of a madman!

A madman?

I sat down, white and shaken as the thought struck me. Maybe *I* was mad! Maybe there were no voices at all. Maybe I'd never actually heard the voices of anyone else. Maybe my own mind was cracking up, and inflicting these weird illusions upon me.

But no. After all, there was Joe Raddatz. I had the name okay, and he actually worked here. And there were other men in the plant whom I'd identified since. Somehow I *had* heard voices, and real thoughts.

Or was *that* insanity? Did insane people go insane simply because their brain functioned *too well*? Is an insane person only a person whose brain is more active than it should be? Is he using that nine tenths of his brain that science says is just dormant and

waiting for his future evolution into a higher type of creature? Just what is insanity, after all?

They put people who hear voices into nut houses. But maybe they *do* hear the voices. Maybe they aren't insane at all. Maybe they are just like me!

I looked at the gun again. A thought struck me. If I'm nuts, then I'd be nuts without the gun in my hands. I'd bear these voices any time; maybe all the time. Pick up the gun and see—

I picked up the gun and watched it shake from the trembling of my hands—

The horrible scream of agony that echoed in my brain jolted me right up to my feet with a gasp, and with a cry of terror I hurled the gun from me and ran. Through my mind echoed that scream of utter pain, the scream of a human being in such torture as might be imagined only in Dante's *Inferno*. Somewhere, somehow, a human being was dying in slow agony—and *I was hearing him die!*

I couldn't stand any more. I managed to slow to a rapid walk, but I kept on going until I got to Clocky's cage.

"Punch in my time, Clocky," I gasped. "I'm quitting. I've had enough of—of welding," I finished weakly.

Clocky stared at me peculiarly, then grunted, punched my card and handed it to me.

"You can get your check at the office," he said gruffly. "Sorry to see you go, Dick." He looked at me queerly. "Say, you ain't sick, are you?"

"No—no!" I said hastily. "I'm okay. Just decided I don't like welding. Besides, I want to take a vacation for awhile. I've been working too hard, maybe. Guess that's why you think I look sick . . ."

I mumbled the last words as I walked away. I didn't look back. Why should

I? One thing was sure. I had seen the last I was going to see of that damned welding gun! If I wasn't nuts, that gun would make me so sooner or later.

A HALF hour later I was out of the plant on a street car heading for home.

"His hotel's clear through," said a voice. "He dug up a lot of stuff and he's getting too smart."

I, Richard Shaver, was going insane, I was sure of it now! I sat there in that street car with the awfulest feeling of fear I have ever experienced, listening to the absolutely crazy babblings of my own mind. How could it be anything else? Even if this were mental telepathy, how could I tie up such a phenomenon with the things I heard? They didn't make sense. Even insane people make sense, but this last voice in my mind—*his hotel's clear through*—what does that mean?

"He's dug the cellar of his house clear down to the caves," the voice explained.

The voice in my mind had answered my question! I sat as though I'd been struck by lightning. But I still had some sense left in my head—I gasped out another question, this time audibly and the man next to me turned to stare at me blankly. "How deep is that?" was what I said.

"About three hundred feet—" said the voice, and suddenly there was a startled note in it, and it faded away. At the same time I felt a numbing shock in my neck, in my spinal column, and I almost screamed with agony from the blinding headache that sprang into being.

"Say, mister," said the man next to me, "you'd better get home and to bed—you look sick!"

I stared at him through pain-filled eyes. "Yeah," I gasped. "I had better. I am sick . . . Got a terrible head-

ache." I climbed to my feet and staggered to the rear of the car and got off.

I walked the rest of the way to my room, fighting the blinding pain in my head. I barely made it to my bed before I blacked out. And as I blacked out I knew a faint glimmering of the truth. Somehow, by some weird super-scientific means, unseen beings had caused this headache—possibly the same ones I'd heard talking that weird gibberish about the hotel—and that I'd brought it upon myself by asking questions. I'd revealed the fact that I had been listening in, and it hadn't been a welcome discovery. The pain-filled blackness into which I sank now was proof of that.¹

* * *

WHEN I awoke my headache was gone, but not my fear. I fled from Detroit as though the devil himself were after me.

To no avail; I could not escape the voices. I heard them day after day,

¹ As dramatically as it is possible for me to do so, I have pictured those first weird happenings that led me almost to the brink of madness, and then to the most incredible adventure that ever befell a man. In order to give my knowledge to the world without being suspected of madness, I must present it in the guise of fiction. Remember that all this wordiness is supposed to be, but is not, just a way of convincing you momentarily of the truth of an obvious impossibility, for the sake of the escape from dull reality which it offers you. So allow yourself really to believe, not just temporarily for the sake of the effect. This story will not seem like fiction to some who will read it. For it is substantially true; the caves, the good and wise users of the antique machines, the fantastic evil mis-users of the antique weapons, all these things are true things and exist in secret in many parts of the world.

Keeping that secret has been a custom, an hereditary habit of the Elder underworld. Surface incredulity and fear of the supernatural has made it an open secret that keeps itself; for you will find that the case records of insane asylums are chock full of patients whose only complaint was that they heard mysterious voices in their minds.

In this story, I intend to reveal the secret to the world, to those who have the intelligence to seek to understand what I say.—Author.

night after night. It went on for months until finally I had become more or less accustomed to them—until I began to understand the whole horrible picture. And also came to understand the fate that was in store for me.

The voices came from beings I came to realize were not human; not normal modern men at all. They lived in great caves far beneath the surface. These alien minds I listened to seemed to know that they had great power, seemed conscious of the fact that they were evil. However they also seemed to think themselves infinitely clever, but the truth of the matter was that they were obviously stupid.

I discovered this from listening carefully. Their thoughts were incredibly contradictory: to make things worse was to get along better, to make enemies was to be more powerful, to torment anyone was a personal satisfaction, to love any living thing was weak and stupid.

Who were these voices? Where were they? It took me several years to figure it out, but finally I was successful. And when I finally had learned the truth, they knew that I had discovered it, was becoming informed as to them, their place of residence, their mode of living, their evil thoughts. And since fear is one of their mainsprings, they feared me.

It was not too long before I could overhear them in my mind, plotting my destruction, though why they should have had any trouble about that I could not at that time understand. When I gained more knowledge of their stupid, crazy mind's workings, and learned that they believed they cannot actually kill a surface man without first building up a frame for the killing that will make it appear either suicide or accident or death from natural causes, I began to realize what was ahead of me.

This belief of theirs is based primarily upon their fear of discovery and its implications, plus a more realistic danger: though often stupid and usually duped, there exist among these *dero*^{*} people many who are not as malicious and evil as the worst degenerates, and these *tero* are impelled to avenge murder committed for no really good reason, even when it is the murder of one of the helpless, because unknowing, surface people.

"He knows too much; we must kill him," became a frequent thought I heard in their minds, and it terrified me. I tried desperately to contact the only ones I knew could help me, the *tero*, but I did not succeed. I was neatly framed, and here is how they did it:

They framed me subtly and completely, so subtly that I myself, although aware from hearing their thoughts what they were up to, did not realize how to avoid the trap until it was too late. I fell for every one of their tricks, because their devious deviltry and their incomprehensibly stupid motivations were not yet clarified in my mind. It was under their control that I did a thing that proved to their enemies, the *tero*, (whose vengeance they feared and whose conscience they had to find a means of dulling by building up a case sufficiently plausible to deceive them into accepting my fate as necessary)

^{*} This is a shortening of the term "detrimental robot." It means, briefly, that they are "people who are slaves to a degenerate mind." Their brains have become radioactively poisoned by rays from the weird machines they constantly use and whose use they do not fully understand and whose rays become detrimental because of non-replacement of vital parts, which thus becomes impregnated with radioactive accumulations whose emanations are harmful (just as radium must be shielded by lead to prevent serious burns). Thus all their thinking is along destructive channels. Obviously, then, a "*tero*" (in contrast to a "*dero*") is one whose thinking is integrative, or constructive, in quality because his mind has not been poisoned by radioactives.—Ed.

that I was no friend.

After that came the harpy hue and cry which has for ages followed and caused the death of the best minds among surface men from persecution by their own kind. Daily it rang in my ears while I fled from city to city to escape it. Yet, when my brother became involved and they killed him, I argued with myself that I must be having delusions, that his death was natural, that all this could not be without some mention of it in the papers or in books.

I SHALL not take more of your time to give the details of how the axe fell on me; it is all too sordid. I assure you it did not do me credit, and I would much rather forget it. Suffice it to say that my enforced escapade, which I was blindly urged into by the subtle energy of the telepathy machines and other incomprehensible mechanisms using rays and forces that surface man never heard of, ended with my arrest and sentence to a state prison.

To this end I, a well-intentioned human being, had been driven by those potent rays in the hands of evil idiots in earth's hidden caverns!

But that I was thus imprisoned was not enough. They poured continuously upon me pain rays that, added to mental control which continually got me into disgusting, dangerous situations, kept me on the verge of madness from despair for years. I learned at length and in infinite detail just what Hell really can be, and at the same time I realized that such a Hell has been the daily lot of many men of earth since earliest times.

There was no relief or way of seeking aid from the continuous and almost unbearable torment. Had I complained to a prison guard that I was being tormented by invisible rays, I would have

been taken from the prison to be shut up in a madhouse. I knew there would then be no hope of release. Waiting and patience might at length gain my release here at the end of my sentence; but in a madhouse, once certified mad by medical men, I realized that I would not even have the solace of attempted flight from the dero rays, to the end of my days. For from the talk of other prisoners I knew a madhouse to be a much harder place to get out of than a prison.

I know those dero only let me live because my life was a burden to me, and because my torture was a delight to them and they feared no retribution.

I had become but a thin, haggard ghost of a man when release came from a quarter I had lost all hope of ever contacting. In some manner the dero, the sane, well meaning members of that strange cavern life, seized control of the area of land in which the prison lay.

MY TORMENTS ceased abruptly. A new and intensely wonderful life began for me. For the first time in years I was able to relax, although for some time I lived in dread of the return of the suffering to which I had grown almost accustomed, as one grows accustomed to a painful limp.

I began to dream and my dreams were infinitely pleasant though bizarre in the extreme. I could not recall them wholly upon awaking until one night *she* came to me in my dream, and that dream was as fresh in my memory when I awakened as though it had been an actual reality. She came to my cell, apparently, and sat herself upon the edge of my iron cot. With her came that laughing spirit of youth and mischievousness which I had almost forgotten as the face of freedom. The oppressive feeling that is a part of prison life vanished; she had brought her free face

before my eyes.

She seemed clothed in a soft luminosity that threw rays of strangely invigorating light upon me as well as showing her strange, rich other-world beauty to me. She had hair of faintest golden tint, just off white, and it lay smoothly drawn back from her brow and was caught at the nape of her neck with a ribbon that was a pale green, a green that had lain so long in darkness that it had lost its original color. Her eyes under arching brows were wide and had no expression, yet her assurance in every movement as she came into the cell did not betray what I learned later, that she was blind. The eyes were very large, and faintly blue. Her features were not out of the ordinary, but strangely and beautifully exaggerated: the too-large eyes; the delicate, utterly sensitive nose; the drooping, too-large lips that were made for caresses they had not received. Her beauty was far from the standard variety one finds under the surface sun. She had that strange, wise quality men have sung of as the witch maid's alone since time began. When she spoke, such vitality sprang into being on her strange face as woke every instinct in me from the long hopeless sleep in which they had been plunged. Yes, her face was freedom to me.

She wore a loose garment that hung from her shoulders to her calves and was belted by a metal circlet of netted links into which was thrust a metallic object which I recognized as a weapon of some strange kind.

IN MY dream I sat upright. My youthful visitor took both my hands in hers, saying—

"Do you wish freedom so badly, then?"

I replied: "I want it more than life, but capture would be inevitable. Then

I would get no more chances to escape.

"If you are willing," her halting, apparently little used English voice said, "I can take you to a place where no police have ever shown their face, and where none ever will. You have only to agree to do as I tell you, without argument, for one year. I can free you quickly, and in truth I need your services."

I embraced with enthusiasm any prospect of escape, and could not imagine that "doing her bidding" would be anything but pleasant. I agreed to her proposition, adding some fervent prayers of confused and stumbling words that I hoped expressed my infinite despair and the bright face of the hope she brought me.

Thus came to me Nydia, as I called the blind girl after the blind maiden in Bulwer Lytton's "Fall of Pompeii." In the morning after that first dream of her I found upon the cot that pale ribbon she had worn about her paler hair. I knew then that it was more than a dream and I looked forward with mounting anticipation to further meetings with a person who could come to a man as a dream and leave behind an actual memento. How had that ribbon gotten through those walls and bars?

It was some time before the magic was explained to me. She had promised me that she would very soon find means to release me from the prison, and that mysteriously actual ribbon was a constant reminder in my pocket that she had powers beyond present day wisdom. I still do not understand how those antique teleport mech's³ work,

³Teleport mech—a means of transmission over a distance of an actual object by means of tele rays. This machine could transmit a solid thing in a way that might be comparable to the way a photo or map is transmitted by radio. However, there is a difference in principle which Mr. Shaver has never been able to fathom from his study of the machine.—Ed.

but work they do, and she had sent the ribbon over it after she had shut off the dream-maker machine. But I will explain that later.

After that, she came to me frequently, sometimes she was just a kind of projection, and sometimes her sweet, actual body lay in my arms, I swear. I grew accustomed to her visits and the hopes I began to entertain built me up more and more in morale, particularly as I was no longer tormented. In time I realized that she loved me truly, a man who had not seen a woman in many years of imprisonment. She loved me in dreams more vivid than any reality could be, made so by the stronger-than-human thought impulses sent over her strange dream-making instrument's rays.

She loved me with the first maiden love of a girl for a man, for she herself had long been a prisoner in one of the caves and was but now set free. She read in my heart all that I was, and our mutual and long desire for freedom that becomes a constant part of one's thoughts after long imprisonment brought about between us a kinship that blossomed swiftly into glowing love for each other. So it was not long before she told me all was ready, that she would come that very night during the darkness before dawn, to release me, and to take me with her into her hidden home.

THAT same night the key grated in the lock of my cell door and I was not surprised to see the guard standing there as if dazed, his eyes unseeing. By then I understood something of her powers, and understood that he was a man under mental control. Behind him I could see reproduced the form of the blind girl, her transparent form bending over a huge old mechanism, her face a mask of concentration. The guard

waited until I had emerged, almost cringing in my dread lest this was just another dream from which I might awaken, then he locked the cell door behind me, the cell now empty of its victim. We walked to the outer door that led from the corridor. This he opened and stood waiting to lock it again after I had passed out. I looked at him curiously, for his face was peaceful as in sleep and his eyes were unseeingly fixed ahead on space.

Silently as a shadow I slid out and no sound ever was so sweet as that door's lock clicking shut behind me. I sped across the open grounds and into the nearby forest and there beside me again was that transparent slim ghost of a Nydia leading me by the hand. To my undying amazement, the projection of that miraculous ancient mechanism felt as solid to my hand as real human flesh, though very different and thrilling because of the augmentative nature of the mechanism. Love with augmentation is immensely more desirable than normal love.

For miles that phantasm led me deeper and deeper into the bills. In the dark I could visualize every stone and bit of dead branch as though my feet had eyes of their own. They did—a blind girl's electric perception, developed since she was a child in the use of those miraculously potent and indestructible mechanisms, was able to sense those trifling obstacles and lead me clearly among them.

As last we came to the base of the mountain, to where it reared rocky slopes to the night sky. In the cleft of two rocky shoulders yawned a door. It was a strange door, for it was covered with earth and grass and small bushes, all alive and growing. As soon as our feet crossed the threshold, the great mass of the door lowered silently and I knew that no man could detect where

that door might be.⁴

THE dim light inside the cave I found emanated from long tubes running along the walls, which contained some self-actuating material which glows. Once, it was probably productive of a strong light, but now it gave off but a dim glow. The blind girl sensed my thoughts and spoke: "In other of the caverns there is brilliant light which can be switched on and off. There the tubes are wired to one of the ancient dynamos, which must now and then be replenished by water, which is the fuel of many of the ancient power generators.⁵ In those caves, the dwellers have normal eyesight."

Into this twilight the ghostly little figure continued to draw me on. We emerged at length into a vast room, around which could be dimly seen huge mechanisms of incomprehensible uses. Beside one of these stood a soft, utterly enticing figure that was the duplicate of the phantasm that had led me here. The screen still glowed brightly from use.

As my footsteps rang on the ancient polished stone of the floor, this little figure raced toward me unerringly and threw herself into my arms. Her no-longer-dropping, flower-red mouth sought mine like a starved animal scenting meat. As she left the receptor

screen of the ancient mechanism, the phantom beside me disappeared abruptly.

"Dick, my poor love! You are safe with me at last. It has seemed so long," cried her voice that was music to me who had starved for the tender tones of a woman's voice for so many years.

My arms went about her slender child's form. I leaned my face to those questing lips and learned more about love in two seconds than all the past of my life had taught me. The little witch had left the augmentor beam on me and only those who have loved under those ancient impulse augmentors can understand the depths of love. I knew that I had never really lived until that fierce moment when our love sprang into flaming life.

At last we stood, just looking at each other. I felt sure that Nydia could see me, her intent wide eyes were fixed so surely on me.

"I cannot believe that you do not actually see me!" I exclaimed.

"Almost I do," she responded. "You seem much bigger, now that you are here. My mind can see you, in a way that you will learn to see, too."

I looked about for the first time. I realized that my little sweetheart was but poorly clad, not at all like the projection she had made of herself into my prison cell. I learned later that that projection was largely mental, so that her likeness went clad as she would have liked to be clothed. In reality her garments were but a few well worn rags. I myself could have wished I wore less than my prison denim, for the temperature was high, as it is in deep mines. Her fair hair, her large unseeing eyes, her paper white skin, were as I had seen them in my prison.

The vast round space where we stood was surrounded by hulking, mysterious machines; they stood dimly gigantic in

⁴ Such doors into the caves are few but they do exist and no other door is so worthy of a man's search. Always provided the door is not one that opens upon the hiding places of the evil life that is in many parts of the caves, there is no door that can open life before you as that door to the underworld. Read on and you shall learn something of the pleasure and wisdom that opened door offered me, a criminal escaped from a state prison. You shall learn, too, that there are other things yet more wonderful than the seemingly impossible feat of a blind girl snatching a convict out of a prison.—Author.

⁵ The water is disintegrated by some unknown process.—Ed.

the faint light of the cavern lamps.

I ASKED Nydia where her people were. She said with a little laugh that they were leaving us to ourselves at this moment of our meeting but that I should meet them soon enough.

"Oh, Dick, in some ways they are different from surface folk, and you must not let these differences disturb you. They are prepared to welcome you heartily because I love you and they love me. But it is not our custom to admit surface people to our hidden ways, for they are so apt to fear us and thus hate and be a danger to us. Greet them naturally and show no fear or repulsion no matter how they look to you. We are different from the kind of human you are used to. We need men like you to aid us in our constant struggle with the living devils that inhabit much of these underground warrens. But when we try to approach men for this purpose they fear the whole thing as madness or ghosts or whatever they have been taught. You see, we are forced to fight the devils because we wish evil to no one and cannot be glad when others suffer, and that is a way of thought that all the evil cavern wights⁶ hate and seek to destroy."

She led me from the huge machinery cavern into a smaller room that was a strange mixture of architectural magnificence, the work of the Gods, and old hand-made wooden furniture that must have been brought into that place two hundred years ago, or more. We sat on a wooden bench that was a half of an oak tree, split length-wise, with wooden pegs for legs. She told me more of her people. They had come from England's northern underground seventy years before. They were but few, only twenty living in the ruined splendor of that an-

cient God's retreat. Most of them had never read a book, although Nydia had a few poor samples of modern books. But they had read men's minds over the ancient beams that penetrated through miles of the rock of the hills and was so conductive and augmentive one could read a man's mind many miles away. In some ways they knew more of life than does the ordinary man by far.

Many of them had contacted surface folk and striven to persuade such persons to join them but had been rebuffed probably from a fear that their soft invitation was a mental delusion or masked some snare. For those men who know of the ancient secret know also of the evil it has always done, hence fear all ray people⁷ through many are wise and good and try to nullify the evil and reduce the torments inflicted by the degenerate evil members of that strange life.

OF THE twenty in this group at least a half-dozen were blind because of their heredity, like Nydia. For many of the cavern people come of stock that lived so long in almost total darkness as to become blind as the fish in cavern

⁶ Ray people are taken to mean all of the modern underground race, both the dero and the tero. They are called "ray" by Mr. Shaver because that is the means they use to spy upon surface people, and to talk to them, and to perform the many weird things their machines are capable of doing. It is by rays that they operate. For instance, have you ever had a fearful nightmare in which you have been faced by horribly realistic monstrosities such as your waking mind has never conceived, to your utter terror? This dream might have been produced in your mind by tele-projection from the dero creatures of the caves who delight in causing surface people horror and terror. There is another and more significant reason behind this practice, and that is to build up superstition and fear in surface people that has been proved their greatest protection against discovery by upper-worlders. They fear discovery because it would mean their extermination by a vindictive human race, seeking to revenge itself upon its age-old torturers.—Ed.

⁷ Wight—an elf. In this case, the dero people.—Ed.

rivers become blind. Ages of life in the dark had developed other senses than sight in their particular family, compensatory senses. The others, strangely enough, had very large eyes, much too large for normal vision, with great black openings in the iris. Evolution had developed the faculty of seeing in the dark in these. Their skins were often light brown; or a paper-like, bleached white; or a mottled, strangely lumpy appearance which came of a disease peculiar to the caves. They are not like surface men, these dwellers in the caves.

But these *tero* were a kindly lot and a friend of Nydia's was a friend of theirs. I soon saw that they had little comprehension of the terrific significance of the ancient secret of the caverns' mechanisms or the value of a knowledge of their uses. It was difficult to realize their lack of imagination and their casual acceptance of the facts of their age-old customs in regard to surface men. It is not, after all, so many years ago when all such people were burned as witches and sorcerers. They had never attended a school, yet their knowledge in general was surprising for people raised in practically total darkness. It is because they absorb general information from reading many men's minds. The fact that rickets is not common among them I attribute to the beneficial rays which the ancients made a part of the pleasure-ray machines which they are proficient in using from long practice.

Perhaps our education and its consequent results in thought are not as important or remarkable as we of the surface believe. Certainly our thoughts offer these *tero* small temptation to join us; they prefer, I think wisely, their seclusion. Nydia, not alone among her kind, but rare, had vast plans and different ideas than theirs; she had always urged contact with surface people and had at last fallen in love with a sur-

face man and brought him with her into her cavern home.

THE space within the mountain was an Aladdin's cave, beautiful beyond a modern man's imagination. The hall where Nydia next led me, saying it was a hall where the group met for any social purposes, was pillared by mighty metal simulations of trees, hung with crystalline, glittering fruits. In every one of these great rooms stood several of the enigmatic ancient mechanisms, themselves beautiful of form and shimmering with prismatic color.

Some of the machines had a startling way of talking; when one neared them they would speak in a strange tongue, beautiful sounding words of a meaning incomprehensible. That is a strange sensation, hearing a machine speak to you. I suspect they were equipped to announce their need of oil or other minor adjustments, as we equip mechanisms with red lights to indicate need for adjustment.

The solid, gleamingly polished and super-hard floor of rock was inlaid with weirdly beautiful designs and symbols which I deduced were writings in the Ancient's lost language. Imperishable metal lounges, once probably covered with the "shining fabrics which the Gods alone could weave"^{*} stood beside the gleaming, ancient "mech," as the cavern people call the old machines. It was in this great room that later that same night, or day, I should perhaps say, Nydia's family and other members of that group formally welcomed me, the surface man who had joined them for the balance of his life.

AMONG the cavern people, marriage is purely a personal matter, people either live together or they do not, and

^{*}"Shining fabrics which the Gods alone can weave" is verbatim from "Ulysses."—Ed.

it is no one else's business. I often think their attitude in this respect is the correct one. In the caves, when two people promise themselves to each other, they keep their promise; which is more than I can say for surface life. Nydia spent exactly one week showing me that what happened to Tannbauser in the Hollow Hill with the goddess Venus can still happen to mortal man. She had studied the uses of the antique pleasure mechanisms under masters—some of whom I met later. For one week I experienced all the pleasures of a God's nuptials; tremendous stimulation generators poured super-powered pleasure impulses through every nerve of my body at their full capacity. If a man could die of pleasure I am sure that I would have died then. But my tender hearted Nydia was no slave of pleasure. She was a sweet normal girl in love and I learned more of what infinite pleasure life could hold in that week than ever mortal man did before.

At the week's end, my little blind witch began to talk of other things than love and of honeymooning. I will admit that I protested at length, but she gave me her reasons quietly but firmly.

"There is much you must learn, my innocent, if you would live very long down here. We may at any time be attacked by savage, mad ray-men from the evil places. You do not yet know how to fight or work with these tremendous weapons. We cannot wait. Besides you have promised to do as I say for one year, and my purpose in making you promise this to me was just that, that I might teach you to be of value to us in such a fight.

"I am yours and you may do with me as you please," I told her gravely, and I meant it.

"I shall show you, dear lover, the true nature of those whom we must fight against if we are to survive," she said,

musingly. "There is so much to tell you, to teach you, that I hardly know where to begin. But first of all you must know whom it is that we must battle against. Come!"

She led me to the great hall where I had first met her and paused before one of the mechanisms. Her hand on the control, she swung a huge distance-ray beam and almost immediately upon the visi-screen a scene of utter horror became visible. I could hardly believe my own eyes' evidence. That was a Hell, a real Hell, I looked upon. Men hung swinging from hooks, boiled in fluids, writhed on racks, thirsted in the stocks, sat on spikes tugging to get off, lay under hammers that crushed them inch by slow inch, or slid inexorably into machines that sliced them gradually with the thinness of a microtome.*

NYDIA explained the horror, and I got at last the full significance of the ancient legend of Hell.

"You see, they will not allow their victims to die, but keep them alive through every torment by the use of the beneficial rays. When a man is nearly dead, they place him in one of the vitalizer machines for a day or two and he is healed up completely. Then they start him through the thing again. Do you see those shriveled bundles at the side? That is how the victims look when they finally do die."

We watched the horror for a space and Nydia concluded—

"Some of those men have lived in that torment for twenty years. This is our enemy's pleasure palace; a Hell for helpless victims of their lust for blood and pain. From immemorial times, they have had such Hells in the underworld, and it has never ceased. You see, you surface Christians are not so far wrong

* One of various instruments used to cut sections for microscopic examination.—Ed.

in your pictures of Hell, except that you do not die in order to go there, but wish for death to release you once you arrive. And they are very careful about letting a victim die, for that would end the fun. There has always been a Hell on earth, and this is one of them. Every man who falls into their hands, from the caverns or from the surface, faces one of those torments-to-the-death you witness. It never mentions such things, your newspaper, does it? That bunch of misbegotten spawn of an afreet¹⁰ fears all living men."

"Do any surface men know of this thing?" I asked her.

"It's impossible to tell them of such things," she answered. "Since there is no logical reason for anyone behaving as they do, none of the motives that animate surface people being evident in such activity, they can't believe any tale of modern Hell. Even if you show them projections of the things that go on in the evil caverns, they are sure that it is a concoction made up to frighten them, from motives wholly mischievous. The truth is, almost none of the surface people believe in the existence of evil ray-groups from antiquity down to the present day. They don't even understand the detrimental robotism¹¹ which is the underlying cause of such a horror. And there is no way to tell them, short of taking them there. Even if they knew, what could they do? They have no

weapons to fight an ancient ray weapon, nothing they could do would stop the thing. Since most of the victims come from among us cavern people, surface people never miss anyone without having a simple explanation for the disappearance."

SHE twirled a dial on the great apparatus and swiftly the picture on the screen swept through the beautiful caves and came to rest on a group of things that should not live.

"Do you see them?" she demanded. "Those things that could not live but for the beneficial rays they bathe in perpetually? The worst thing about them is their fear of technical men. They are so stupid they think that modern science might produce weapons affective against their mighty antique mechanisms, so they particularly persecute and obstruct modern scientists on the surface, although the truth is, it is improbable that men can produce anything equal to the ancient work in even centuries of effort."

"Have you had many other surface people here?" I asked her in wonder.

Nydia shook a sad little blonde head.

"It is very difficult," she admitted.

"I have planned for years on recruiting and training a group of men who would be far superior in ability to those evil ones we fear. But surface men fear us, chiefly because they have heard the

¹⁰ A monstrous evil jinni, a demon, a horrible giant.—Ed.

¹¹ Detrimental robotism—actually the two words from which dero is derived, using the first two letters of each word. Thus it can be seen that a dero is a being who is a robot (or slave) to a detrimental process of thinking, a process that always ends in something bad. Dero people's minds are affected, so that their thought processes are warped into evil channels. Picture the brain as poisoned, and picture a thought as something that must make its way through the convolutions. This is not actually what happens, but it is an analogy that will help you to understand. Con-

ceive of the thought as a good thought, such as doing a good deed. But by the time the thought has gone through the brain and transmitted into action, the thought is no longer a good deed, but a bad deed. For instance you are impelled by your thought to help a blind man across the street, but by the time you get to him to do it, your thought has changed so that you trip him and laugh as he falls into a mud puddle. That is the way a dero thinks, and why he always does evil things—his brain is so poisoned by detrimental energy that all his good thoughts end up bad. Pure thought, say the philosophers, is always good. It is only rendered bad by the effect of a sick human mind.—Ed.

whispered lies and horrible thoughts of the evil ray-men."

I looked with loathing and sick disgust at the Things that were now pictured on the vast visi-screen. In truth, they could not have lived save for the protection and beneficial force rays of that Elder Race that had once lived there. Small wizened imps, goggle-eyed, their goblin appearance was that of walking dead men. And dead they would have been except for the synthetic body electric which the ancient generators of life force pour through thier bodies forever. Because of this supply of super energy, these evil people live on long after they would normally be dead. It is this fact, also, that makes them evil, for they are in truth not able to create thought, and only the slow decay of their brains is energized by the synthetic electric, which is the real cause of the evil, destructive nature of their thought. It is not genuine thought at all, hut a reflection of the decay in their minds, which is a disintegrant pattern, not a creative one.

Nydia explained all this to me very clearly, and I know she was right, for they looked extremely unhuried, long dead, but horribly alive. I believe that if they were cut off from this ancient supply of life-generating electric mechanisms, they would not live a week. Some of them hung over balconies around the scene of that hell upon which I had looked sickly a moment before. They were obviously gloating evilly. Others were talking over the telepathic ray mechanism with people on the surface.

"To torment their victims is their greatest pleasure. They have little ability to enjoy other things. And they are always amusing themselves torturing helpless beings who have fallen into their hands. It is a terrible thing to understand, but it is true."

"WHERE did this particular group come from?" I asked Nydia.

"The ancestors of this group came from underneath Arabia. They came long before we did, more than one-hundred and fifty years ago. Some of them are one-hundred and fifty years old, too, I have learned. The Arabs knew them as afreets, the devils that whisper in sand blowing at night, or scream like lost souls in the sand storms, and mislead the poor Arabs, causing their death with lies or tormenting them with pain rays."

But those afreets, or goblins, upon which I stared on the visi-screen were not whispering in the wind or the sand. They were, instead, lisping into the straining ears of some of the most influential tycoons of the surrounding surface industrial area. The lies they told! I learned later by myself, reading the minds of some of the rich, that many of them believed in the power and efficiency of the Secret Ray of America, which they thought was a service like the F.B.I. for the purpose of searching out escaped convicts, bank-robbers, extortioners, kidnapers, etc. To these tycoons the ray-dero from the hidden caverns posed as a secret service, hard at work solving several murders and robberies they had committed themselves. They were amazing mimics, considering that they had little real intelligence, but only a pseudo-thought arising from their long experience in reading men's minds.

"My dearest Dick, you must learn very quickly all that I can teach you," murmured Nydia tensely. "Then you will be better able to help our sane group—who are really very good and wise—protect ourselves from those mad ones. At present we are able to hold them off, but at any time they may get the better of us. They are really mad idiots, in spite of their clever mimicry of sane people's actions. They slay us

whenever they have an opportunity to do so without loss or danger to themselves.

"Come, now!" Nydia continued, "—into the ancient thought record library. You shall read the history of the great race who builded these imperishable caves and the indestructible machinery which is capable of who knows what miracles. These records tell of a time when the Great Ones lived on earth long before history was recorded by writing. Thus, you shall know more about the earth and the life of Man in the past than any other living man from the surface—more, too, than most of the cavern people, for few of us study long enough to learn to appreciate and absorb the wisdom that lies in such places as this library of the recorded thought of the mighty men who were

once called Gods by people of earth. This is the place that has made me intelligent and worthy of life. You will become a great man if you use this wisdom, my lover."

Into yet another chamber Nydia led me and guided me to a huge chair, like a giant's dentist chair, though the upholstery was missing. She pushed me into it, and I was lost in its tremendous size, which made her laugh deliciously. There were several flexible metal straps which she fastened about my wrists, waist and neck. Then she took a strange helmet, fastened to a heavy cable, and placed it on my head.¹²

"Lie back and relax. You will soon be another person entirely in another period of time. Do not let the double sensation of being two people at once worry you; it does not last long. This is the greatest experience the ancient wisdom of the caverns can offer you, to read the mighty thought—to actually become as a God of the ancient times."

I saw her throw a Titan-size switch on the wall and in a flash—

* * *

I WAS not Dick Shaver, but another man entirely. I stood in a forest of tremendous fern trees. Beside me was a long, enormous cylinder of smoking metal, still hot from its recent passage through the upper air. From it emerged a woman, larger than I, and in her arms she carried my child.

The fern trees seemed topless, stretching up until distance made the tremendous fronds seem fragile and delicate to the eye, at last disappearing in the mists. In the sky I could see many similar cylinders and knew they were decelerating and would come to rest at last near us. I knew that we were members of an Atlan¹³ colonizing

¹² When I gave the world the story of Mutan Mien (In "I Remember Lemuria!" in the March, 1945, *AMAZING STORIES*) as my own memories, I could not reveal exactly how I remembered the far past, without bringing the story down to the present day. Thus it was that editor Ray Palmer mis-named it "racial memory." So now I shall explain the actual truth of how it came about that the ancient, forgotten past can live today, exactly as it was, in the mind of a modern man—myself.

Through scientific, indestructible mechanisms the Ancient Ones' thoughts were recorded on a kind of micro-film, sealed in non-corrosive containers. Placed in one of their thought-record projectors, these records yield more precise and accurate information about that ancient life than any of our history books about more recent events. By the nature of synthetic thought-electric flows given off in strength by these particular mechanisms, the person "reading" the record feels he is himself the person experiencing the occurrences described in the thought-record. The flow of image-bearing energy from the record is so much stronger than one's own entry of consciousness that the experiences produced from the record remain in the mind more vividly than any actual experiences. Thus these records control the mental processes in such a way that the past is lived again in a more vivid fashion than one's own life. These records left by the Elder Folk are a more faithful transcription of actual history than any other records kept since.—Richard Shaver.

¹³ Atlan—one of the three major races of space, the other two being the Titans and the Nortons.—Ed.

expedition, sent to this blazing new sun and its planets where life was furiously fecund, capable of developing a crescendo of growth into complex forms that would from our landing onward be guided by our skill and wisdom. My ship was the first to land of the colonizers of planet three under this new star named Sol.

"Put the child back in the ship, Lia," I called to the woman. "Then help me get out the materials for our house. The sooner we are safe within its walls the better, for we can't tell what forms of inimical life may have been developed since the tests were made so long ago by the explorers."

"Yes, Lord of my Heart," answered the obedient Lia.

The two of us began to haul out from the cargo compartment of our spaceship the sections that enabled us easily to put up the walls of our new home. The walls contained giant spider-web coils which would set up an impeding magnetic field that would allow only beneficial energy to enter my home. The house walls, once the power was turned into them, set up a huge force field which allowed only waves of a certain frequency to enter the interior. This particular frequency had been determined upon by exhaustive tests of the beneficial and detrimental content of the electric and magnetic waves sent out by the star, Sol, overhead.

From time to time as I, Dull, and my wife labored over the rapidly rising structure, other spaceships drifted down into the great clearing where we had landed first of all upon this planet which we called Lemuria, or Earth. These were fellow colonizers, who immediately set about erecting their homes as Lila and I were doing. It seemed that no time at all had passed before the pioneers had settled down into more or less regular living in their new environment.

The days passed eventfully, for each one brought immense new vistas of the possibilities that lay in the immensely more fecund and different growth from anything we had known.

Within the chambers of that house I knew those beneficial vibrants from that new sun would build up a charge of increasing potency, for the waves could enter, but, due to the direction of the flux of the field in the walls, could not get out again. Thus, the house Lia and I had constructed became a great trap for beneficial energy and within it we Atlan children would grow swiftly to great size and immense strength and unbounded intelligence.¹⁴

I LIVED through what seemed years of time. I saw the cities grow. Over our homes, after a time, we erected

¹⁴This thought record story, given to Mr. Shaver by Nydia, was a logical one to begin his education into the past history of the Earth, for it depicts the arrival of the first Atlan colonists on the Earth, named by them Lemuria. The reason for colonization was that our sun was then a new sun, still sending out radiations from a carbon fire only, and not from the poisonous metals, radium, uranium, polonium, etc. (the heavy metals), and was thus a healthful place to live. Even so, the colonists built their homes in a manner to keep out the poisons that cause old age, which might be present in some small quantity.

Our sun, today, from which the Atlans fled 12,000 years ago (see "I Remember Lemuria!" in the March, 1945, *AMAZING STORIES*) because it was causing the disease of old age by projecting minute disintegrances down on the Earth in a steady rain, is the answer to the riddle of death our scientists seek to solve. In water, the poisons are present in heavy suspension, especially in thermal springs; in the air the poison floats forever with the tiny thistledown of dust it has infected and to which it clings; it settles in the leaves of plants—so that we take the poison in with every drink of water, with every breath, with every bite of food; and as a consequence grow "old" by tissue and cell inability to restore itself fully because of the hindering and ever-present flux of disintegrance from the accumulations of radioactives. Age is nothing but a radium "burn"; a damage to the living cell so that its functions are gradually stopped and retrograded until restoration by normal process is impossible. When the cells can no longer renew themselves, we die.—Ed.

domes of crystalline plastic. The air within each dome was not dusty or poisonous, but was a prepared mixture of gases, germless, fortified with health-giving nutrients, odorless, super-penetrating, an ever-present agent for physical well being.

The light, always on where needed, never oppressive, was a soft luminosity that possessed a beneficial force all its own, even contributing an additional push to the forces that make life grow in beauty and strength. The natural electric magnetism of earth's force field, which is in itself an agent of integration or growth, was strengthened and focused on the sidewalks and in the living chambers of those wondrous cities, so that the natural rate of integration growth of matter was increased by hidden mechanisms focusing overhead magnetic field lenses.

These field foci were formed where the light and happy feet of our people were led most often in pursuit of that pleasure that we called work.

For work was pleasure to us, in the increasing flood of strength and awareness that in ever greater tide flowed through our limbs. For in these cities of new life age was conquered and youth growth never ceased. When a physical body grew too large to continue living in comfort on earth, these larger beings graduated by stepping into a car, kept at the bottom of a long rock tube pointing at the stars far above. With similar companions they took their places in that space car. Then through them and through the metal body of the car rushed a flow of force, which, countering the friction of the penetrative particles that cause gravity¹³, rendered the car weightless.

A small explosion mechanism like a large cap pistol of the repeating type began a gentle hammering on the rear of the car, and weightless as it was the

car swiftly gathered momentum, vanishing into space in a moment, for where weight is not present inertia is not present either. So on the reverse flow gravity beam the graduates of Earth rose into space and voyaged through the empty void like a flash of light, presently to slow and circle slowly about another planet, double the size and weight of Earth until the great beams of reverse flow reached up and eased the car down into the heart of another great city, deeper and bigger than the one those beings had left, and much finer and more beautiful, for the builders' minds had broadened as their bodies grew through the centuries.

DULI the pioneer lived a long and active life on the planet Earth and I, Richard, lived it over in my own brain through Duli's recorded thoughts. Duli became an Elder of the ruling council in the city of Barto on the planet Mu¹⁴, for he was kindly and wise. Many fine sons did Lia give him and life was one swift stream of pleasure and beauty and hard work that of itself seemed only sport to the ever-increasing strength and intelligence of a being who lived under the amazingly beneficial conditions of Barto on Mu. In Barto the life that was being built up for the people being

¹³ The Lemurians say gravity is the result of the condensing (or fall) of infinitely tiny particles of disintegrated matter that fill all space (our scientists call it the ether) into existing matter, such as the Earth is. The friction of these falling particles, falling through matter, causes that "push" we call gravity. These particles Mr. Shaver calls "ex-disintegrance" (or "exd" for short). Here we see the utilization of some sort of force which neutralizes the friction of gravity, and thus produces weightlessness, with the result that a space ship can be driven against gravity at great speed with only very tiny rocket blasts, like little pop-guns.—Ed.

¹⁴ Mu—an abbreviation for Lemuria.—Ed.

bred in the ben-rays was surpassed by no other city on Mu.

But with the passing of years and the increasing growth and size that came with them, arrived also the day when Duli realized that the time had come for him to graduate into a broader life than Mu could offer. He knew that he must leave his sons and the work he had been doing on Mu for a greater planet and its fuller opportunities for life. He stepped into the great space-liner with Lia at his side. . . .

Blackness suddenly hurled itself down upon those vivid thoughts that had usurped the mind of Richard Shaver. He ceased to exist as an Elder of the Council of Barto on Mu, and returned to the existence of the convict who had escaped from state prison because a blind girl from the caverns had loved him.

* * *

I, RICHARD SHAVER opened my eyes and felt quite cheerful again under the spell of the little blind witch-maid who was laughing merrily at my bemused awakening.

"It puzzles you, Richard, does it not? You have lived over a century of olden days yet here you were, all the time under my eyes. You were but reading in the manner in which we read down here, the record stored in the caves long ago of the life of an ancient Atlantean."

"But it was real. I actually did live it," I protested, almost incredulously. "I must have been that man, Nydia. How else could I have known the most intimate thoughts of his mind?"

She shook her head from side to side, smiling.

"It was real, but not for you, save as you experienced that ancient Atlan's own thoughts. These shelves that line our library here are packed full of such records."

"Have you read them all?" I wondered.

"Yes, Richard all. For I am not contented with a bare existence as it is lived here in the caverns. I long for a fuller, wider life such as those ancients lived. So I have read and studied all these records and they are now part of my own knowledge."

"I was enthusiastic as I glimpsed the possibilities her words opened before me. In that little blonde head was packed knowledge of earth-life that scientists would give their lives to acquire and place before the surface world. And I, also, could gain that knowledge for myself and perhaps manage somehow, somehow to pass it on. Oh, it was a brave thought.

"It is not harmful, then, this reading of old records? No risk is entailed by this vicarious living in strange and perilous scenes?"

"How could there be?" she responded simply. "You sit here, quite relaxed and comfortable, and in your brain alone you live many other lives, acquiring thus those experiences and that knowledge which would otherwise take many, many years of life in many forms to gain. Are you willing to learn more, my Richard? Do you wonder that I care not to spend my life in dalliance with love, heavenly as it is thus to pass the days with you?"

"You are right, my Nydia," I cried, enthused. "How wise you are, dear love!"

The blind girl's strangely thrilling voice continued as I stared at her, my own face all wonder at the seeming magic at her finger's end, that could touch a switch and relieve an existence.

"THIS is stupendous," I stammered, dazed at the vistas of wonder her words opened before me.

"Ponder, my Richard, upon the

science you have absorbed from the reading of that one ancient wise man's thoughts as they coursed through your brain. After you have read and thus lived many lives through the records in these caves you will find that there is not a machine down here that you cannot understand and operate. You will even learn something of how they were constructed. Then indeed you will be a most useful member of our little group, for you may then be able to help us devise more efficient ways of outwitting and out-fighting those devilish *dero* I have shown you."

"If you can teach me through these records how to fight those Things you tell me are your bitter enemies, get on with it!" My voice, the voice of Richard Shaver sounded strange in my ears, as though an older, wiser voice had come from my lips.

I felt that to my surface years I had added those other untold years of an ancient Being's wisdom.

"Very well, my Richard. You shall voyage forth again."

Nydia selected a hulky roll of record from the racks and held it so that I could see the words graven on the case. She read them: *Life and Wars of Bar Mehat of Thor, Hero of Three Worlds.*

"You shall live a great hero's life and you shall see and speak with Jormungandur,"¹⁷ the Worm that encircled the world. This is a record of which I am most fond and I have read it often," the blind girl told me.

She slipped the roll into the mechanism at the top of the chair, adjusted my bead-band carefully. Her lips touched mine almost with reverence, so grave was that caress. I sensed that the life of Bar Mehat, the hero, meant very much to my little blind maiden.

It was with repressed impatience that I awaited the touch of her finger on the control that was to open for me the door to a more vivid and exciting world.

* * *

I BECAME another man, a greater being physically. My body was huge yet I was aware that I was very young in actual count of years. My sturdy legs were cased in knee boots of glistening gold-colored synthetic leather, my body in a skintight covering of overlapping golden scales that formed a flexible protection like armour. Upon my head I wore a scarlet helmet that contained thought detection apparatus, for I heard voices and movements nearby although the chamber where I stood was apparently empty. One voice sounded, although distant, particularly peremptory. It was a feminine voice and one that I, Bar Mehat, recognized with a little grimace of half annoyance.

I tossed my head petulantly so that the red-gold hair that fell to my shoulders in shining waves swung loosely with the action. One of my broad, red-haired hands touched the lever of the console before which I stood. A clicking mechanism stopped and was followed by a musical hum like the spinning of a giant top. Dim luminosity pulsed about me. In a four-foot circular mirror above the console a silvery aura flickered madly, to coalesce slowly into the likeness of a young and attractive woman.

Her lips moved and it was then as though she were present in the room with me, for her voice sounded with clarity in my ears.

"Bar, the thing is growing faster than our control of it. It actually threatens all life on our planet. Jormungandur is not a joke."

"Certainly he is no joke; but why fret yourself, who are on land, about Jormungandur who lives in the sea?"

¹⁷ Jormungandur—In Norse legend, a son of Loki. Also known as the Midgard Serpent.—Ed.

My laugh was loud and free. Women! How they worry over nothing! "As long as he kept to the sea why should I worry about him?" cried the young woman resentfully. "It is because he is creeping up out of the sea that I am disturbed. His body now completely circles the earth. His tentacles have spread over half the unsettled portion of Afrik. They are a hundred leagues long and they grope continually for food."

"That is not so good, fair cousin. His tentacles are entirely too many," I growled.

"He has them along his whole body," cried she. "If he takes a notion to crawl out of the water for a breath of air it means the ruin of all the Atlans' work on Mu."

"Has no one done anything to check the Worm?" asked I, in some wonderment for although the Covenant forbade direct attacks that might result in death, yet there was some allowance for self-defense in cases of unbridled encroachment even against an honored and intelligent ancient like Jormungandur, who was friendly to the early Atlans.

"We have a dozen great dis-rays raving at the tentacles but as fast as we disintegrate them he throws out others. It seems futile even to continue for we get nowhere with all our efforts."

"Jormungandur," I mused aloud. "The Worm that encircles the world. Why, Gracia, he was here before the Atlans colonized Mu. Mu is practically his property. Are you sure that it is quite legal under the Covenant to attack him, even if the attack seems futile?"

"This is no time for joking, Bar Mehat of Thor," somewhat acidly expostulated the young woman. "Either you agree to bring sufficient military forces to take a planet from Mephisto

himself, or you do nothing, and I look elsewhere for assistance against this peril. All my Afrik possessions are now completely under The Worm's tentacles, you—you boudoir decoration!" cried my cousin with scathing implication.

I laughed again. I couldn't help it. Gracia's wrath was so easily aroused, and Gracia at white heat was not hard to look upon.

"I shall arrive to banish The Worm before another sunrise," I promised.

"I trust you are not too sanguine," she snapped. "It will take some doing to banish him, Bar. Farewell until the morrow."

MY HAND reversed the lever. The image of the pretty young woman faded from the surface of the mirror and once again it reflected only my broad face.

I mused to my reflection: "The Worm, a threat! Gods, one should really have known that it would happen some day. Now I, the simple warrior am called upon by my dear cousin to do my duty by my family. And in what a cause!"

My face in the mirror grinned at me wryly.

I thought, that as chief heir of all the possessions of the Province of Thor, I could muster enough military strength to take a planet or even to blast Jormungandur. I addressed myself to the task by pressing a stud marked "General Alarm to Thor Guard" and spoke rapidly and authoritatively.

"Officers of the Thor Guard are to muster all strength at once for an expedition against the Worm Jormungandur who has become a threat by tossing his tentacles over much land in search of food. Anything that can fly or float on water, throw a ray or carry a bomb is to be made ready for ex-

tended travel immediately. All available weapons are to be loaded and ready before midnight tonight. Destination Afrik. Bar Mehat speaking."

Through my mind in an undertone to the business now in hand ran the history of the Atlan struggle with growth on this planet of Mu. Under the beneficent rays of the new-born sun nothing aged or ceased growth, and existence had depended therefore, those first centuries of our colonization, upon keeping encyclopaedic notes on every form of life on the globe, in order the better to forecast the future development of each species. For as the humble caterpillar changes to the miraculously different moth, so did these new creatures of Mu develop startling metamorphoses and variations. Since none of them died, and since but little of the planet was as yet explored or settled, strange and numerous were the threats to our continued existence which came out of the dense jungles or out of the fathomless depths of the seas, ravaging down upon our attempts at an ordered and cultured life.

Most of these tremendous monsters of growth had been slain like the Giant Man, a freakish growth of the earliest days, who had attempted to eat everything living on earth, but had at last been slain by our hero Byrr, and whose body in rotting had fouled the air of the whole planet. Or like Fenris the Wolf, who before he died had sired a race of giant wolves which still infested northern forests. The number of giant life forms that made us Atlans trouble were legion, but somehow Jormungandur the Sea Worm had escaped our general war against them. The Worm had always seemed safely confined to the seas and he had moreover agreed to the terms of the Covenant, hence the Worm had never been considered as a threat

to existence on Mu, despite the fact that under the fecund rays of the new-born sun his growth would have been predicated as in itself a threat.

THE jungles in which lived those giant variants of life were, if considered for themselves alone, terrifically beautiful dreams of life growth. The trees seemed to grow upward forever, and to be topless. There was no average size from the tiniest stalk to the trunks of some ancient trees that were acres in extent. They were the result of centuries of unimpeded, unchecked growth under completely favorable conditions. For as yet nothing aged and died on Mu.¹⁸

As most of the spores of life on Mu had originated on distant planets under aging suns rather than by spontaneous generation under the new sun's beneficent warmth, there were of fruit and flowering a-plenty.¹⁹

Those flowers were often of such monstrous size that could stretch myself out in one as in a swaying hammock.

So also all trees tried their best to

¹⁸ The natural nature of life is to go on living forever. Death is not a part of the scheme of life. It is only the result of radioactive poisoning from an "old" or metallically disintegrating sun. Thus, here on Mu at the time of Bar Mehat, the sun was sending down only beneficial radiations of carbon, which is not a poisonous element, but on the contrary, the basic element of living forms. Thus, nothing grew old, or died, except by actual destruction through accident or through killing. All things, including vegetation, continued to grow so long as there was a source of "raw material" and energy. A living thing grew through two processes: the replenishing of its body cells by transmuting foodstuffs into living cell matter; and by assimilating the disintegrated matter which fills all space and which science today calls the "ether." The reader will remember that it is this, condensing and falling toward all matter (which also includes living beings, naturally) that serves to build up the universe, and as a by-product of its function, causes the phenomenon we know of as gravity, by the friction of its progress through matter.—Ed.

emulate Ygdrasil.²⁰ There were many serpents in the dense forests and in adventuring therein one was quite likely to run into the giant body of a rainbow-hued reptile whose girth was too great to climb over and whose head and tail were both out of sight in the distance.

The hunger of these things was beyond description, but the supply of every form of life was of an abundance that cannot be even imagined. The monster Scylla by the whirlpool Charybdis; the Worm; the frost giants whom I, Bar Mehat, and my intimates often visited, as had my ancestor, Thor.²¹

²⁰ How big the tremendous flowers of the dark under-forest were it is difficult for Richard Shaver to judge, since surface folk of today measure everything by comparison to the average size of a man, and the Atlans of the new planet Mu had no such criterion. Bar Mehat's size was governed, as was that of other Atlans, by the age of his parents and his own age, two variant factors that resulted in a wide variation in size, which did not run uniform to the years of age, as in modern man.

As nearly as Mr. Shaver can judge, Bar Mehat was about twelve feet high and a very young man at that, as his parents were huge giants of the far planet of Atlan. His years on Mu were under twenty.—Ed.

²⁰ Ygdrasil—Norse myth: the world tree whose roots and branches bind together heaven, the earth, and hell. Today the California redwoods still live, to prove that such monstrous growths once existed.—Ed.

²¹ Cerberus who guarded Hades in the latter days, after the flood had receded and death by old age came upon the world, is well known. But these were the later days, that "twilight of the gods" and of their greatest battle, "Ragnarok," when the poison of our aging sun's induction had maddened those who tried to remain on Mu.

It can only be conjectured for surface men, what life was like when the sun was new. Since nothing aged, the forms of life were of mighty, ever-increasing size. The legend of the Worm that encircles the world and to eat must consume his own tail, was probably as near as one could come to any description of sea-monsters whose farther ends would be out of sight when one glimpsed their gaping maws. Men, too, were mighty of size, yet there were some very tiny, the products of a science beyond present-day mankind.

The "seeing rays" of those ancient scientists

I had recollections of my home city, Atlansgaard, colloquially called Asgard, not far south of Ginnunga Gap, a canyon of abyssmal depth to the north and east, separating the civilized area of the Northlands from the Dark Lands, as the wild and practically unexplored land of the Giants was called. Those giants were a race from a *der*²² planet. They had been shipwrecked on Mu and as yet there had been no particular reason to banish them, driving them back to their home planet. They were comparatively ignorant and as far as we Atlans knew, harmless. They were called

reached everywhere, and from this our religious faiths have derived their teaching that "God is everywhere." Those rulers were probably widely aware of all near and far surroundings on Mu, for their beneficial rays and poisons made them so. They moulded life forms to their will. They precipitated energy ash (ether) and from it synthesized the elements they needed most. Space travel was so commonplace with them that they thought of it in the same terms in which we of today think of motor cars.

What we can find of their thought is interesting especially in its multiform concept known for short as MAG-ic, the word being derived from IC, later Greek for science, and M-AG, or Man-augmented. This magic reached its height before two things, both long expected, happened. The carbon layer around the sun burned down to the heavy metal underneath. Sunlight became increasingly poisonous, since it contained minute quantities of disintegrant metals; disintegrant flaming lead, radium, titanium, uranium emanations filled the bright sunlight. Old age, long prophesied, appeared.

Then began the periodic migration to a new, carbon-coated sun. Most of those Elder Folk left Mu for planets of kindlier augury. But some of those brilliant beings, loving "Mu" as they called our mother earth, remained, fighting the poisonous effects of sun metal with their extended knowledge. Before its accumulations could bring on old age, they would extract it from their bodies magnetically. Thus, keeping their immortal youth, sheltered in their deep caverns from the heavy metallic induction of our sun, those remnants of the race of Immortals stayed on, to be the source of our legends of the gods.—Author.

²² Der planet—detrimental energy planet. One on which an aging sun pours its rays, and causes, in addition to age, a mental detriment, insanity. Our Earth, today, is a Der planet.—Ed.

Frosts; why, I myself, could not have explained. They were of huge stock, running from thirty to fifty feet in height. I knew that under Mu's non-aging sun their growth would in due course be something terrific and I realized that their existence was a problem that would have to be settled in the not-too-far future. There were many such problems and the Atlans were not yet well enough entrenched on Mu to have solved them all satisfactorily. There was much tendency in the life forms of Mu that was alien; it had to be weeded out eventually, since only conflict can be expected from life forms not of the same source pattern as our own.

I EMBARKED on the flagship of the fleet that in a matter of hours was flashing over the tremendous sea of earthy waves that was North Afrik.

Our space ships settled behind a convenient range of mountains over which we could see the tentacles of the Worm writhing like titanic serpents against the morning sky. Here and there blazed the fiercely brilliant orange of powerful disintegrating rays and even at that distance the smell of roasting flesh was noticeable; unpleasantly so. We broke out our smaller scout planes for reconnaissance. I went aboard the foremost, for I wished also to visit my incensed cousin and reassure her that all was well since I and my forces had come into the picture.

As our scout planes shot upward, a long vee of strange planes boomed up from the south and shot past our formation in a northerly direction. I had thought I was familiar with every type of plane on Mu, from jet to nose-ray, but the design of those planes was entirely strange to me. They disappeared from my sight, but not from my questioning mind. Strange planes above Mu were not to be ignored; their presence

might be forerunner of grave trouble.

Within minutes, my arms embraced the very attractive knees of my charming cousin Gracia and her tirade of feminine near-invective poured itself upon my defenseless masculine head.

"Wise Bar, of the blood of the great Thor, could not any fool have foreseen this? Jormungandur, nonetheless, came on the Rolls of the Covenant. Explain that, you feckless dreamer!"

"Sweet cousin," I protested meekly, striving to stem the flood of that aroused ire. "I did not create the Covenant."

"A most fortunate fact that you didn't. Do you know what lies under those reaping arms, blind and stupid one? Do you know what that beast of the abyss of ocean has eaten?"

"Gracia—"

"Ten thousand acres of parasites I developed, to destroy alien plant forms. Now, in one week, that infinitude of belly has destroyed ten years of our best labor."

I tried to block that tirade with a recital of the magnitude of the forces I had headed for the retribution that must necessarily be laid upon the Worm for his rebellious action against the Covenant, behavior code of inter-racial law.

"Look, cousin, I have complied with your wishes. Last night my fleet assembled on the waters of Jotun Bay outside my windows in Asgard. It is a heterogeneous collection, I will admit, but look how little time you've given me to get it together. Glossy jet-planes, Gracia, some submersible fliers, and some heavy-bodied passenger planes to carry men. Not to mention three thousand top fighting men."

She shrugged her shapely shoulders and wrinkled her nose distastefully.

"I notice that you have not brought your armored space-ships, hero."

I was quick to pick up that in rebuttal.

"Because, fair cousin, they are too unwieldy for surface work. Yet, I did dispatch several with large cargoes of foodstuffs and ammunition and other supplies for our base on the Gold Coast."

She beaved a deep sigh of unwilling resignation.

"Oh, I presume you have done the best you knew how," she stabbed.

I COULD not refrain from grinning. Gracia was not a good loser and she had lost out with me thus far, for I had not failed to think of everything at my command that might be needed in that mighty fray that was scheduled to take place between us Atlans and the Worm.

I knew that killing a thing with the growth rate and titanic strength of Jormungandur was not going to be a simple matter. His body encircled the whole earth and was of incalculable mass.²² Its nature was much that of the starfish; break it in twain, and both halves grow. That his great age had developed mental reactions of a kind similar to human thought was known to us from the fact that this had been true of other monsters of growth on Mu. I was shortly to learn just how far this mental development of the oldest and most monstrous creature on Mu had been carried by the beneficial rays of the newborn sun.

I returned to my scout plane and thence to the flagship of our air fleet.

²² Obviously here the description is not an accurate one. By Bar Mehat's own admission, earlier in this thought record, all of Mu (Earth) has not been explored. Apparently the known portion of it (except for casual observation from space ships) consisted only of Europe and Africa, and a portion of Asia, probably just east of the Norse countries. Thus, the Worm, Jormungandur, occupied the Atlantic ocean between what is now the above-mentioned continents and the continent of Atlantis (also included in the known portions). Its size must have been tremendous, perhaps as much as five hundred miles long.—Ed.

My ship was equipped with the mechanisms that would put all space at my command, to be seen and heard and to throw my voice into the ears of those whom I willed to hear it. I had the ship hover over that part of the ocean between the continents of Atlantis and South Afrik, that particular spot where it had been said that men had talked with the Worm many a long day ago. I switched on the vis-ray, and it sank miles deep into the murky depths. At last, after I had turned it hither and yon, there glowed on the visi-screen like twin moons the awful eyes of the most ancient life on Mu.

The telaug revealed his thoughts to me and I pitied him as that river of desperate and weary meaning flowed from the thought cloud like the drifting soul of a lost sea. The Worm was hungry. He was weary of the emptiness of a life that contained nothing but slumber and feeding. His groping tentacles were no longer able to find sufficient food and he was bitterly resentful at a fate which had given him life which he found it difficult to sustain, and later had given him thoughts so that he understood what he was. For long I pondered that wretched but intriguing life that was the brain center of the Worm that encircled the earth. At last I spoke, sending my voice to the distant Worm's lair.

"Garm," said I—in Afrik and near parts Jormungandur was called Garm—"Garm, speak to me. Give me an answer, for I am your friend if you will have me so. From the darkness that shrouds you, from the gloom in which you must wallow in the abyss of ocean's depths, speak to me, who wishes you well. It is Bar Mehat of Thor who calls you."

THAT deep river of gloomy meditation ceased its slow flow and concentrating itself reluctantly, looked out of

the pale lucent orbs that were Garm's eyes. Great abstract thoughts welled up the ray and flung themselves on the thought-cloud like corpses pushing upward for release from the sucking ooze that clung to them. That husky, thick voice enunciated words with heavy difficulty.

"It is long since Man has sought me out. What would you of Garm?"

"In the old days, Garm, you were one of the few of the serpent race who upheld the Covenant's code. Why have you forsaken the ways of peace? Why are you now unfriendly to Man? Your body is now partly on land, and it is land upon which my family has expended much labor. Now all that constructive work is spoiled and many good men whom in the old days you would have called friends, rejoicing that they lived on Mu, those men have died under your long arms' fatal suction. Must we then slay you, Garm, that we may live?"

Garm's thoughts milled over this problem. They flickered back and forth without much consistent form on the thought cloud.

"Once I loved men," he slowly answered at last, his thick voice dull with a kind of indifference that troubled me, the listener. "I loved them for the bright pictures they sent me and for the beautiful children they bore. I loved them for the tales they told me of their lively doings in the sun. But now they have long forgotten me, and I raven for food.

"I am grown too big to feed myself well, even though I draw from the vast seas in which I lie. It may be that you must kill me, for I know not and care not longer what I do. Life holds no significance for me. I have outgrown life, perhaps."

"Garm, I think that if you will but be reasonable, we may find some way to feed you, so that you may continue to live on," I offered, my emotion being

one of real sympathy for a creature so outgrown that we could not by any means within our power send it to a larger planet. Or so I thought at that impulsive moment.

The voice of Garm droned on: "Once a man of your line went a-fishing. Yes, I recognize you for one of Thor's line. For a joke I took the bait between my jaws and raised up my head near his skiff. He was, like all of your blood, a stubborn fellow and he pulled the bottom out of his boat, trying vainly to land me. At least, that was his pretense.

"After I had carried him ashore on my back we talked for a long, lovely time, he sitting on the sand and I with my head lying on the sandy beach beside him. He told me a tale of another such serpent as myself, grown too long for comfortable living on his birthplace, and he predicted that the same fate lay in store for me, unless I found death by some other means. That great serpent encircled earth as do I, and when the time came that abundant food was no longer available, he took his own tail between his jaws and swallowed it, and after many years he died thus.

"It may be that I shall do that thing, though of late I do not love men or their doings."

I PONDERED the great Being's bitter words and at last I spoke thoughtfully.

"You must know something of our thought magic, Garm? If you will do that thing the other great serpent did, we will arrange that before you do it you shall have many weeks of continual pleasure dreams. You shall sense in dreams glorious matings and victorious struggles. We will give you the equivalent of many lives of pleasure.

"This will take much energy that we could well spend elsewhere, but it will

be worth that to us to rid us of your overgrowing, enormous appetite that is becoming so destructive. We will pay you in full and you know that we are honorable. You can weigh this thing well. Will you take our word and after your dreams die honorably, a true son of the Covenant?"

"Bar Mehat of Thor," answered the great serpent, "if your dream-makers deal honorably with me, so will I deal with you. And this you cannot have known, that besides yielding up my life there is a thing or two which I have learned that I will grant you freely without concealment. I know your magic, but your dream makers may weigh the value of their own lives in the balance of their calculation as to what dreams they give me, for I have means of saving them or letting them drift on to death that will seize upon them unawares. Tell them that, O Son of the Past Great, and bid them measure me out abundance of glorious dreams in gratitude."

Thus it was that I talked with the Worm that encircled the world. And thus it came to pass that Garm told me of things that I knew were true, for I had seen that flight of strange planes that headed for the dense forests that we Atlans had thus far left practically unexplored.

"Strange outlanders came over my seas in great ships and hovered long, sending me their promises of many dreams, as you have done. But they did not ask my death, Bar Mehat; they asked my living aid.

"I learned somewhat of their dreams, and their dreams are not my kind of dreams, Bar of the old line of Thor. There is no light laughter, and there are no gallant young ones with them. Their lives have been miseries of everlasting warring. I want no part of such wretched dreams.

"But they had a ray which they can put upon any part of my body and through that ray control me. So when I gave no consent to their supplications, they forced a part of me to lay waste such portions of Afrik as lies between the two great rivers. So, if you seek them out, where they have hidden themselves within the Dark Lands, you will know whence any coming trouble sources."

"I have seen their space ships, Garm. I knew them for outlanders," I exclaimed. "We shall take steps at once."

"THEY mean to take over the earth and to develop fecundly. They come from a quarantined planet and have somehow eluded the Atlan *der* patrols. They believe they can win over the Mu folk before help can be called in from greater space against them. How they expect to hold Mu against the entire Atlan space navy, once they have won Mu, I fail to understand. But they are stupid, despite their mechanisms of power, and perhaps they think not of it, or expect by crafty trickery to cheat the Atlans into letting them alone on Mu."

An idea flashed into my mind as I stood staring at Garm's vast head, looking into his fierce elder-wise eyes, twin greenish silver moons flickering through sea water.

"Garm, in the caverns where we breed life forms, our technicians have a way of removing the brain from an animal, a living brain, and putting it into a metal bottle where it lives on, fed by fluid foods and synthetic blood. Since you are grown too big for this earth, will you consent that we may put your brain into a bottle and keep it for a record of the past?"

"You have certain wisdoms which you can teach youth, and you like the young, laughter-filled folk of our Mu

people. Later, after you have grown accustomed to our ways on land, you will have many friends, and later yet some colonizing expedition can take you with them and plant your living brain into a young reptile on some other planet.

"You may live your life over again and again. Do the Der men offer you anything of like value? And in return for this prolongation of your life, will you then aid us against them?"

The limpid moon eyes flickered into near opacity as The Worm concentrated upon this new and far more interesting proposition I had proffered. I waited patiently for his response and felt certain it would be affirmative. After all—

The thick voice came slowly after a long wait. The moon eyes had cleared and shone greenly through the sea water.

"I accept your offer," said the Worm. "I would fain live on and see your brave new worlds that else I might never visit. I am ready to accompany you when you give me the word that you are ready to attack those interlopers from a quarantined planet. I dislike their warring and resent bitterly that the people of Mu must be forced into battles because of them. Yes, Bar Mehat of Thor, I am your ally against them.

"And when the hatching is done with, and you have driven them from Mu, then you shall send me first the dreams for which I yearn in my now empty existence. After I have had my fill of dreams, I shall let your technicians take my brain and preserve it as you have said. Some day I shall again live in liberty in the body of another serpent on some greater planet. Yes, Bar Mehat, I agree."

I was overjoyed at Garm's decision for something told me that he would be an ally not to be scorned in the battle that must ensue shortly between my

forces and those invaders from a *der* planet.

"I shall call you, then, Garm, when we make our advance," I told him. "You shall follow my forces—"

Something lively sparkled in the great green moons that were the eyes of the Worm.

"I am to wipe up the debris of your victory?" husked Garm, with a note of derision that piqued me a little.

"No, no," I protested half-heartedly.

But Garm's thick throat uttered a kind of snorting laugh.

"Rely upon it, I shall be with you when and wherever you lead," said he enigmatically, and with that our conference ended.

THUS it was that when my forces made ready to advance into the Dark Lands where the invaders had entrenched themselves in expectation of our coming, Garm's tremendous body flowed after the army of Thor's men. The sight of him was comforting as we pressed on into the night of the jungle. Like a mighty river of greenish black flesh encrusted with barnacles and sea plants, the titanic Jormungandur was a reservoir of strength incalculable, in truth of a value of many armies because of those splaying tentacles that absorbed all life they seized upon.

Like the mighty leaders of prior times I strapped to my back my anti-grav packs and flitted ahead with my scouts. These anti-grav packs enabled us to rise to a considerable height above the ground, which was a great advantage in entering that jungle where otherwise we must have been obliged to spend much precious time slashing down the heavy undergrowth. A number of the scouts were to go on ahead, it was arranged, and I flitted not far behind, with another

squad of scouts directly in my rear. After these came the main body of our troops. It was while I went on in this way that I saw the girl in the trees, and learned what kind of enemy we had to face.

She was wearing an anti-grav pack and she had depended upon it to escape the swaying head of a monster reptile whose coils lay over the rude path that ran for some short distance into the forest. She had apparently no weapons of defense or had lost what she had possessed, in her flight from the great snake. Now she was entangled in the thorny, shielding branches of the tree to which she had flown, and the serpent seemingly did not care to thrash about against those prickly thorns with which it was equipped. I alighted on the branch where the girl clung.

"What has happened? Have you no weapons?"

"It came upon me so suddenly," she faltered, "that I dropped my ray-gun. And what use is a knife against that scaly skin?"

I looked at the reptile. It would have to be eliminated, or its presence would block the advance of my men. Moreover, the creature had set its stupid mind upon capturing what probably seemed to it legitimate prey, and it kept its evil eyes hypnotically upon the girl, who trembled with apprehension.

"The thing must be slain," I said boldly, and let myself down lightly upon the sloping back of the monster snake.

I SCRAMBLED up the scaly back to the bumpy ridge of its spine. Then I pulled my disintegrating ray from the holster and blasted a shot through the center of the spine, severing the spinal cord. I raced lightly, depending upon the anti-grav pack to lift me as I leaped, until I had reached the head of the titanic and maddened reptile. At every

alternate bound I blasted another path through the spine, leaving behind as I went a paralyzed column of motionless flesh. As I reached the taper of the mighty neck the great head turned, jaws gaping to slay this stinging insect that had wrought such swift destruction, but with swiftly triggered blasts I cut the last nerves at the base of the head. Red threatening maw and evilly gleaming eyes dropped supinely to the earth.

The girl scrambled lightly down from the tree and threw herself at my feet and flung her arms about my knees, embracing them with heart-felt thanksgiving. There seemed to me no time for amenities and I lifted her face and looked piercingly into her wide blue eyes. It seemed to me that I saw mirrored therein a clean and innocent soul and I felt well rewarded for my strenuous and perilous combat with that monster reptile. I surmised that this girl was an outlaw Atlan, else she would scarcely have been at large in the forests. I asked her directly.

"Yes, I am an outlaw."

I did not care to take time to ask her why, but I did feel that she could be trusted.

"We seek those who drive the great beasts to attack the Atlan cities. Do you know where they have hidden themselves, maiden?"

The girl remained on her knees, but her limpid eyes were raised to mine.

"Are you the leader who seeks those evil people of the dark forest?" she asked.

I nodded in affirmation.

"Had I known that the leader of the forces was so princely, I would never have fled the Atlan cities," said she cryptically.

"This is no time to exchange pleasantries, maiden. Do you know the hidden entrenchments of my enemy?"

"You must be Bar Mehat," she said,

ignoring my query.

"I am indeed Bar Mehat of Thor," I assented with impatience.

"Then I am for you. I owe you my life. I belong to the forest people, of whom you must know. We are outlaws and hide always from such as you. Among us came, not too many years ago great ships with many guns."

"I know. But recently I saw some of their space ships and knew invaders had landed on Mu. Go on, maiden."

"They are not like us," said she. "They have skins colored and blotched like lizards. Like the chameleon lizards. Somewhat on the order of man are they, with four limbs. Their webbed feet have prehensile toes and their hands are long-fingered. They have a long, fleshy tail that tapers to a whip-like point, hanging from their rumps. They have large, flat heads and their eyes are lidless and reptilian, and are covered with a translucent membrane for protection. Oh, how evilly red those eyes can glitter!"

"Their features, maiden. Do they resemble men?"

"Oh, no, Bar Mehat. Their noses are small and flat and their mouths are wide. They have no chins and their teeth are heavy fangs. Oh, they are most horrible to look upon."

I LIFTED her to her feet.

"I take it, maiden, that you must be aware from your familiarity with the forest of where these lizard men have entrenched themselves. Is your anti-grav pack in good order? It is? Then come with me," I ordered, and rose in the air to flit ahead of the second squad of scouts that, seeing me in conversation with the girl, had halted in my rear.

So we went on together and as we went the girl continued to tell me of those pirates of space who had escaped from their quarantined planet.

"They promised us forest folk riches and power and security. Many fair promises they made if we would help them drive out you Atlans. They come from the forbidden spaces where death reigns," she shuddered. "They do not worship the dark gods of space as you Atlans and we forest folk do, for they believe in no good thing. They have learned that death has not yet come to Mu and they think that now, before the Atlans are too well settled, they can drive you out and learn to live as the gods live, by studying your cities and the minds of their captives."

"They are very evil and some things they do made me so fearful that I fled into the deeper forest that I might see them no more. Ah, I cannot sleep yet for thinking of their horrible life, their disgusting mottled bodies, the stink of them. And on those who will not go their way they inflict torments, for they hate the way of the Covenant. They are fools and stupid, though, to believe that they could ever win over the wise Atlans who make friends so easily."

We flitted on for a few moments in silence and I pondered much over what the girl had told me.

"You see, Bar Mehat, whenever an Atlan sees how they work, he becomes their enemy automatically, for it is impossible to know when one pleasures or displeases them, so that it is inevitable that one will in the end be tortured to death. Oh, I am glad to see the men of Atlan coming here in force to banish those foul invaders!"

A CRY arose from the scouts in the van and we hastened to join them. The cause of the outcry was simple, after all. They had spotted a *dero* hidden like a chameleon against a dark tree trunk, the faint patterning of his lizard-like skin betraying him, for in his perturbation at our approach it

turned from rose to purple, to inky black, then again to faint rose. Our men had overpowered him although he was armed with a projectile weapon.

The girl touched my arm.

"Did I speak truth, Bar Mehat?" she demanded. "Is he not as I described him?"

He was indeed as she had told me. I examined his weapon with interest. It was a glass-like gun activated by air pressure and fired a tiny, brittle, venom-filled needle that broke on contact, releasing the poison into the veins of the victim. One of the great cats that infrequently lurk nearer the confines of the forest gave me a chance to test the poison. I fired the gun and the cat whirled and then fell as if paralyzed. Inspection showed that it still lived, but it was incapable of any action, save that its furious eyes glared upon us whom it had been unable to escape. We later found that the venom was similar in effect to wasp venom in that it permanently paralyzed the victim,²⁵ but left him alive for future reference, as it were.

Later, too, we learned that the lizard men had wasp habits in yet other ways, for they, too, kept their victims living for long periods before eating them.

I called for an augment helmet and ordered it clapped on the prisoner's flat head. It was a matter of a few minutes only when his thought, with tremendous augmentation, was flowing back over my entire following forces. In this way I knew my men would be aware of just what they were about to engage in deadly conflict.

These lizard creatures had evolved on a small planet under a very large new sun. While it was not a deadly sun, its

rays being full of beneficial vibrants, yet its disintegrant induction had been a tremendous factor in their development. Their will to live had been great, but their will to destroy was as full, thus coloring all their thoughts with vicious intent, for the will to destroy and the disintegrant electric forces are one and the same. While the seed of greatness was perhaps within them, it had been buried irretrievably beneath a rigid discipline of the revolting kind which allowed the individual little freedom save the right to reproduce.²⁶

WE HAD barely finished the broadcast of the lizard man's thoughts when a tremendous crystal sphere sailed overhead and paused above the midst of our array, for by now my forces had caught up with our scouting vanguard. Then, with a loud report, it flew asunder and there rained down upon us tiny slivers of light that seemed faery spears, playing in all directions. At least a dozen of my best men fell sprawling to the ground as if paralyzed and at that we all knew what had been in that crystal sphere. It was a bomb, full of compressed air and packed with tiny glass capsule needles of the paralyzing venom of the lizard men. It was a most effective weapon and we could not, unfortunately, determine its exact source at that moment.

²⁵ In Atlai language there are three kinds of men: *zero*, normal man; *dero*, evil man, and *zero*, useless man. These lizard people were for the most part *zero*. Equal parts of good and evil in the character made their total effect in life merely a repetition of the status quo. But they were foolish enough to allow domination by the *dero*, which rendered the total effect detrimental to all other beings and their own true interests as well. Just so has Hitler, a *dero*, caused the weight of an entire nation of men to be thrown on the detrimental side of the scales. Other men are not smart enough, or well enough intentioned, to remove one Hitler. Notice the world conflagration resulting from the devotion of one nation to a detrimental energy robot.—Author.

²⁶ The venom of the wasp is shown on stung spiders, when it destroys the nervous system but leaves the spider living, perhaps conscious, to be eaten later alive by the wasp grub, a system of food storage.—Ed.

After that first one, sphere after sphere hissed down upon us through the air and Atlan's bravest fell in windrows. Some of our men thought it a good idea to pick off the spheres with disintegrating ray rifles, but this resulted in the bombs bursting high in the sky, only to rain the venomous needles more widely upon our heads. I had ordered huge disintegrators, mounted high on trucks at our rear, to drop sweeping fans of destruction into the forest ahead of us. Their range was almost incredible, so that fires of many miles in width sprang up ahead. At long last the spheres decreased in numbers and I felt that our rays must have destroyed some station from which they had been dispatched.

I had been well aware that to use a large disintegrator in the jungle was an infraction of the Covenant's code, but if any intelligent life existed simultaneously with those lizard men in the jungle ahead, it was self-doomed by failure to warn us Atlans of the impending attack. All rules are tossed overboard in war, sooner or later. That forest fire, which under ordinary circumstances would never have been allowed to rage, among those trees so big that a man could hardly grasp their immensity even with his imagination, was a sight never to be forgotten.

We Atlans have a curious way of putting out such fires. We have an atomized carbon ray which we spray into the down-drafts around the flames. This is activated carbon, more inflammable than ordinary carbon, and divided with extreme fineness so that its particles are driven along by certain waves of light. Thus an atomic carbon ray is formed which is sprayed over the fire. The carbon did not, as might be thought, increase the intensity of the fire, for the finely divided carbon combines with the oxygen of the air, blanketing the whole area with carbon dioxide, so as the rays

swept the fire ahead, it died.²⁰

AS THE fire broke a way through, my forces marched, leaped or soared over the smoking jungle. To the danger from the enemy army that must be ahead was added that of falling limbs from the great trees that stretched a mile overhead. Some of those giants, remnants of the first early growths, were six or seven miles tall. These gargantuan trees now stood blacked at the base, and at infrequent intervals limbs as long as several city blocks and weighing from twenty to a hundred tons would crash near us. Once in a while the smouldering embers would burst into flame that would leap skyward through the now dried-out framework of lower limbs, but a few well-directed sweeps of the atomic carbon rays extinguished these as fast as they sprang up.

It was a relief to all my thirsty, soot-covered men, when we sighted the enemy's camps. Uttering shrill cries calculated to fill us with apprehension, the lizard men at once set up a barrage of venom glass needles to halt our advance. Here I had made some preparations which I believed might be the answer to that type of attack. Forewarned by our prior experience I had ordered that some of our huge disintegrators en route, approximately a hundred, be adapted to prepare from their rays what is called a wind-ray. This is a dual ionizing ray, one ray positively ionizing the air and another negatively ionizing the air. When the rays are held far apart a gentle breeze springs up between them as the molecules of air, drawn by the attracting charges they bear, rush down to neutralize their charge and are pushed aside or spread by the outer in-

²⁰ Apparently the heat of the combination was lost by its dispersion.—Ed.

rushing air. When they are held closely together and highly energized, a terrible vortex of intrushing and uprushing wind is formed. These hastily adapted devices were posted like horns of a crescent on either side of our advancing lines.

As the first crystal gloves hissed overhead, these wind-rays swung into action. Thus the globes, instead of falling, shot into the air like rubber balls on a tossing fountain and, juggling them like circus performers, our expert ray men flung them back into the air over the enemy's camp and then released them, to harry our tormentors by their own venomous weapons. This return barrage was greeted by howls of dismay from the lizard men as their own pigeons came home to roost.

Our penetras²⁷ came into action also, sweeping over the whole area in our van, so that whatever was opaque became transparent. What had seemed merely earth and forest growth for half a mile ahead of my forces was revealed, so that we saw and knew what the lizard men were keeping behind walls. In fact, the penetra rays were so powerful that for miles ahead the whole enemy work lay revealed as if we saw it through glass. This was done by bathing the whole area in penetrative rays of a non-destructive nature and sweeping over this with other rays that carried finely divided selenium and other chemicals in the same way that our fire-extinguisher rays carry carbon. These luminosity rays act in the same manner that stains act on a transparent organism under the microscope, bringing out the details in different colors.

WHAT we beheld was most intriguing to my forces. The men

²⁷ Penetra—visi-rays which penetrate and make transparent any object on which they are trained. Thus, in projecting visi-rays through earth, the penetra is used as a carrier ray.—Ed.

bellowed with huge guffaws over the outlanders' methods. In improvised underground pens they had collected overgrown monsters of every description. Held in those narrow tunnels, and fed but little for a long period, these creatures had become ravenous with bestial hunger. Various types of disintegrating rays and venom-hall throwers, as well as other weapons the nature of which was strange to us then, had been attached to the animals' backs. The purpose of this arrangement was obscure until the lizard men threw open the barred doors to the tunnels.

Out rushed the maddened beasts. Mammoths, titanotheres, titanosaurs, dinosaurs and huge serpents rushed down upon us. The ray apparatus on their backs was automatic, sending a beam in a wide arc ahead of the beasts. This beam, a dual ionizer like our windway, completed the circuit when it struck metal. It was then that we realized the new peril we were encountering. The resulting flow of current through the beam activated the firing mechanism for the disintegrating ray. Since all our weapons were fabricated of metal, while those of the lizard men were made out of glass or plastic, these enraged living ray-tanks loosed upon us were more than a subject for laughter, as we had thought when we first saw them through the walls of their tunnels.

At first we held off the terrific onslaught. Our superb gunners picked off the beasts as rapidly as they approached within range, yet the heavy discharges released into the air began to blanket the whole fighting area with a stifling, thought-blocking disintegrating charge. One could hardly move one's limbs because of the effect of this detrimental electric, which leaped like Hell-fires from every bush, every piece of metal, every blade of grass, making the vision

hollow with the disillusion of despair.

It was not long before our fire was slowed by this subtle nerve-paralyzing influence and the beasts pounded nearer in overpowering numbers, their combined weights shaking the earth beneath us, their great maws roaring, and over their fierce heads flashed ever the automatic fire rays, every flash marking a hit on some metal weapon of ours. Whether this was defeat, or whether the disillusion from the strong detrimental that so subtly held our minds under its potent spell was powerful enough to check our aggressive action, things began to look very dark for Mu. And then—

OVER our cowering heads reared the vast bulk of The Worm. No metal to complete a circuit in that engine of destruction! His curling, mile-long tentacles lashed out, and every beast they touched was caught up, crushed, and tossed aside, a menace no longer. He was the most awe-inspiring being I had ever seen, with the great moons of his eyes reflecting his fierce battle joy. One could almost hear the thought in his vast dragon head:

"After all these dull, uneventful centuries, what bliss to fight again for the sons of the friends of my youth! Yea! It is good!" From the throat of Garm a great rumbling roar issued and seemed to shape into words. "On, Atlans! On, Atlans!" And the mighty serpent hiss terminated the roaring words.

The great Worm's bulk blotted the sun from overhead so that we fought in the shade as though twilight had descended upon us. From our van we could see the planes of the lizard men taking to the air as they retreated in mad rout from this unconquerable serpent of the ancient days long past. For

following upon the appearance of Garm the invaders were, for the most part, speeding away, leaving behind them their dead and wounded and the blazing ruins of their camp. The maddened beasts which they had starved and then released upon us were careening off in all directions for the control rays that had kept them advancing upon us in attack now stood abandoned, their tall masts no longer flashing with energy sparks. The battle was over, save that a few of our fastest planes trailed the fugitive enemy, their purpose not to do battle, but to determine the destination of the lizard men that we might report it to the Space Police.

We bivouacked amid jubilant cries of triumph.

IT WAS some days later that our battered columns wound slowly back into the green cultivated areas surrounding my cousin Gracia's white marble mansion. As we marched we could see in the far distance Garm's acres of scaly body flowing swiftly into the sea. I sped on in advance of my forces, by the aid of my anti-grav pack, and came to a stop at the marble steps, where my cousin stood awaiting me and on my ears again fell the unending recriminations of her anger.

"How could you have let those ignorant, undeveloped idiots from a *der* planet so nearly defeat you, Bar Mehat? Jormungandur himself hardly saved you from destruction. How could you have marched into the face of that ominous situation without preparation, without any special weapons, without prior scouting and information—?"

Her voice went on and on, and I began to think that she was probably right and I an impractical dreamer, unfit to head the troops of Atlan. My too-costly victory told this as well as did

the faces of those of my most valued men who still lived.

"I know not, cousin. Youth and ignorance of such traps may be my only excuses," I told her stupidly, for my heart was sick, now that all was well over, at thought of those dead we had left behind in the Dark Lands. "I cannot think of anything else," I apologized.

"It might be well if you did a little thinking, nevertheless, Bar. The Space Patrol is on its way. When it arrives one of its officers will take charge here in command of our Atlan forces and you—you are going back on one of their ships, for you have signally failed to distinguish yourself on Mu. When you are back on Atlan, my cousin, you had best go to the College for Warriors and learn a little something of how to take care of yourself and safeguard your men when you lead them."

I stood with head hanging, for I had no words to give her. She was probably in the right, I thought. I would enter the College for Warriors upon my return to Atlan and I would study diligently and prepare myself in the latest military science so that Mu would be better for my leadership when I returned to that planet.

AS I stood, suddenly blackness rushed down upon me and I knew no more of my cousin, or of Garm slowly withdrawing into the sea, or of anything until a light flashed through the darkness and I became aware of an odd popping sound as of a suddenly released run-down record.

I awakened to the soft laughter of the blind maiden as she switched off the thought record reading machine.

Her hands fell light on my shoulders and she leaned to kiss my forehead before she removed the apparatus from my head.

"The record film broke," she told me regretfully. "They are so very old, it is surprising they have lasted so long. Perhaps it is of little consequence, after all, for that record of Bar Mehat ends when he returns to Atlan."

The faint sound of a gong rang through the cave and we took each other's hands and went together to the dining-hall where the entire group customarily met for meals. I was for hours in a kind of daze, for it seemed to me that I was still Bar Mehat and not Richard Shaver.

Later I realized the lessons from that life I had vicariously lived. It was that anger and warfare, struggle and death, are the fatal fruits of *der*, and *der* was the distortion of the magnetic fields of the thought cells of a mind by disintegrant electric. And Mu in those earlier days had not turned inductively under the new sun long enough to induct the great charge of detrimental electric which makes our life today the hell it really is. It is not good to be a man on a quarantined planet of *der*. If one reads the ancient books that exist always in these old, abandoned planets, one learns that life away from an aging sun is immortal life, while on a *der* planet it is a brief moment of existence and thought under a blasting sun of death.

As this knowledge sank into my mind from the great brain back of Bar's thought-record, a terrible despondency seized upon me. I realized that Earth was now such an outworn living place, quarantined from the great immortal life of space because *der* means warring and men of earth think *der* thoughts. If only we could build again such houses as the Atlans built, which barred the entry of all detrimental energy flows, or even live in caves as did the later Atlans to shield themselves from a deadly sun, we might become again

something more than the mere insects we now are.

AS MATTERS now stand, I have become one of the underworld, of those who have been called trolls, gnomes and goblins in the old days. We are the same today and still my friends here fear surface men. For man cannot understand or believe any other form of human life but his own, and they fear us greatly when they learn of our existence. Yet those of us who are kindly intentioned need man's understanding and assistance, for our lives are struggles for existence against the malefic schemes and powers of the evil and idiot denizens of the caverns. Because I realize the tremendous importance of our continued existence as an intelligent group, I have thrown in my lot with Nydia's little band. Nightly I stand my watch against the devils who have made their homes in the farther caves. Our life here is purchased at the price of never-failing vigilance. We peer over the old visi-rays, focusing the ancient lenses to the farthest range and sweeping the caves with them for the slightest indication of attack, that we may turn it back before it reaches us.

Daily I spend much time reading the ancient thought records, bringing thus to my knowledge the lives of the mighty, ancient God-race that existed immortally before our sun aged and they adventured elsewhere. The tale of that aging sun and of the flight of the Elder Folk from its effects is written in those ancient thought records.²⁸ For as the sun ages it grows more dense and as it becomes denser it throws deadly fiery particles out with its light beams. These gather in the body and like radium they never cease to burn; they are atomic fire and deadly in their final result. In time their accumulation burns and withers life away, just as

radium would do if we swallowed it. Only ignorant men, who could not flee into space, remained here on earth to father modern man, for the Immortals abandoned their out-grown dwelling places here when they took to their space-ships and flew away to settle under more favorable conditions on other planets.

It is my constant hope that some day earth men will waken to the existence of these ancient cavern dwellings, full of marvelous machines and secrets of science infinitely greater than theirs.

It is full time that mankind awoke. I live on only in that hope. Until then, I bid the surface earth farewell. I remain here in the caverns, absorbing wisdom against that day, and loving (as only those can love who live under the rays of the ancient mech) my little blind maiden.

—Richard S. Shaver²⁹

²⁸ It is this record that was presented by Mr. Shaver in his first story, "I Remember Lemuria!" published in the March, 1945 issue of *AMAZING STORIES*. When Mr. Shaver presented it to us, he did not explain how he knew it, except in the manner described in the opening of this second story, as a mental impulse from underground minds received at first via his welding gun in a Detroit auto plant. Ignorant as your editor was of the real facts surrounding Mr. Shaver's story, we decided to call it "racial memory" to make it more credible to our readers. We are forced now to retract that, and to admit also, that your editor was the most doubting of all Thomases at the beginning. However, when you read the amazing reactions to this first story, published in Discussions, in the new special section devoted to reporting readers' discoveries and reports on Mr. Shaver's Lemurian story, and in the Editor's Observatory, you will be faced with the same amazing facts which have made your editor look a little silly for having perhaps harmed the credibility of an incredible story by trying to make it less incredible.—Ed.

²⁹ Actually, Mr. Shaver is no longer in the caverns, but back on the surface, as we shall have occasion to demonstrate later on; but Mr. Shaver intends to present in each issue from now on, one of the "thought record" stories that he listened to while in the caves—and thus, for continuity, we have ended this story where it should properly end, in the caves, with more to come.—Ed.

NOT YET, BUT SOON

By JOHN McCABE MOORE

Here is a scientific description of some of the marvels of science that will become part of our daily life when victory has been won.

LITTLE woman, how would you like to be able to roast enough beef for twelve people in fifteen minutes? The proper understanding and control of diathermy (induction of heat in matter by selected radio waves) will just do that for you some day.

Leather will be tanned by the use of rays in a matter of minutes when selected "invisible light" is put on the job. Vats of starch in corn products factories will be converted to sugar (as found in corn syrup) when the Geissler tube (long used for making measurements of myriads of atomic finger-prints) is used to furnish the proper scalpels to make the conversion, not in hours or days, but in minutes! Expensive dyes will be synthesized in jig-time, when the patterns of energy which encourage the synthesizing processes are put to work without the interference of many other types of energy (such as are obtained by the use of heat from a flame). The secrets of penicillin and the sulfa-drugs will yield themselves to the spectroscopist's magic eye, and their rapid manufacture will save millions of humanity from the deadliest streptococci and staphylococci. Cost of producing and processing most of the impediments of civilization will drop tremendously. Even the life blood of modern chemical industry, sulfuric acid, will become so easy to make it will flow like water, quickening the pulse of every chemical manufactory. Not now, but soon.

Yesterday (1937) man devised infra-red lamps which killed fleas (and other insects) right on the backs of animals, without injuring the owners. Tomorrow infra-rays, especially selected for especial purposes will reach into the body and the brain of man to kill bacteria, to destroy tumors, maybe even to cure military tuberculosis. This, however, will probably not come very soon. But he it known that the use of unselected infra-red energies has already made its dent on typhoid. What may we not do, when we learn to use heat selectively?

A few short years ago a boy in Kansas grounded airplanes (just for fun, mind you) by radio interference with ignition. But is a mechanism's ignition as sensitive as the ignition system of the heart? What more terrible or more real possibility is there than that of stopping human hearts by remote control? I tell

you, brother, it is later than you think! The energies emitted by molecules of carbon dioxide acid (fizz water to the soda jerker) are even now dictating the beat of your heart and the number of its contractions per minute. Please remember it is always easier to burn down a house than it was to build it. All that is necessary is the interference of two or three selected quanta.

In 1938 or 1939 an issue of The Pocket Medical Quarterly printed by a St. Louis pharmaceutical firm carried an account (without mentioning names) concerning a medical man who had discovered a combination of three wavelengths from the spectrum of iron (the element's own behavior pattern, so to speak) which he demonstrated to selected witnesses with small animals as subjects, proving that the hemoglobin (the red stuff that makes you a red-blooded American and permits the cells their necessary "forced draft" of oxygen) can be instantaneously and completely altered. He sealed (?) his witnesses lips and destroyed his machine and the records of his experiments. The next man will not do thusly, and he might be born in Japan.

If the destruction of fleas and mammals (and men) becomes thus simplified, what woeful devastation of forest and field may not be visited upon "the enemy" in future wars? The only sensible difference between the hemoglobin molecule and the chlorophyll molecule is that iron is replaced by magnesium.

But let's get back to the post-war planning. That virtually untapped source of gold, silver, magnesium, radium, barium, calcium, aluminum, beryllium, platinum, tungsten, chromium, sodium, potassium, nickel, tin, molybdenum—seawater, the greatest mine of all! Today we laboriously, slowly, expensively wrest a little of its wealth from it by electrolysis. Not yet, but soon, as far as the vast history-span of the race counts soon, that treasure-house too will be opened wide by painfully devised chemical and physical methods, so that tomorrow the dreams of yesterday shall be dime-store baubles!

The diamond, the hardest of all in reality and synthesis both, will yield its secret also, and the chemico-physicist will manufacture jewels of all kinds for watches, for hair, and for the ample bosoms of not-too-proud matrons.

THE END

Weep No More,



"Curt!" cried Nadine. "Who's that girl?" She went white at sight of Lilith.

My Robot

by Chester
S. Geier



**Lilith was only a robot,
so it couldn't be murder to
get rid of her, could it?**

BRYCE looked up from the microscope as the click of high heels on the laboratory floor reached his ears. Nadine stood just within the door, pulling on gloves with sharp, brisk movements of her hands.

"You're all dressed up," Bryce commented, stretching cramped arms. "Going for a spin in the gyro?"

Nadine Bryce shook her lovely head, her green eyes solemn and steady on his. "No, Curt, I'm leaving."

Bryce rose abruptly from his stool.

"Why, Nadine, what do you mean?"

"Just what I said, Curt. I'm leaving. Bag and baggage. This is good-bye."

Bryce swayed, as though from the force of a blow. "I—I don't understand. . . ."

"That has always been the trouble with you, Curt," Nadine told him, with sudden resentment. "You never did understand anything that wasn't connected with your work. Well, you're entitled to an understanding—and you're going to get it. I'm sick of all this." The angry sweep of her arm included the gleaming glass and chrome interior of the laboratory, and the lonely vista of cliffs and ocean which showed through the broad windows. "I'm sick of living like a hermit. I'm still young. I want friends, parties, good times. I'll never get them by staying with you. You're too absorbed in your work."

"I see," Bryce said, with quiet bitterness. He looked at his hands, and for a moment he was silent. Then his face lifted, urgent with pleading. "Nadine, you're the one who doesn't understand. Can't you see that my work would have meant friends and good times in the end? I know the kind of friends and good times you mean. You can't have them without money, Nadine. Everything I've been doing has been toward the goal of gaining wealth, fame, and influence." Bryce knew this last was a lie, even as he uttered it. He loved his work for itself, not for what it would bring. But wealth, fame, and influence were things which Nadine would comprehend.

Nadine hesitated. "Do you really mean that, Curt?"

"Of course," Bryce answered, feeling a sudden justification for his falsehood. Anything to keep Nadine, he told himself. She and his work were vitally necessary to him. Each would not be

complete without the other.

The exquisite oval of Nadine's face softened momentarily—then hardened again. "Oh, Curt, it's futile! I want to enjoy life now. Now, Curt! Not at some vague time in the future. You won't get anywhere with your work for years yet—and I'm tired of waiting."

"It wouldn't be much longer, Nadine. I've solved the most serious problems. The Bryce electronic brain is almost a reality." Bryce went to her, placed his hands on her arms. "Nadine, you love me, don't you?"

She looked away, biting her lip.

His hands tightened. "Nadine?"

"Yes. Oh, yes, Curt! But it's no use."

"You won't wait?"

"No, Curt. I'm sorry. I've stood this kind of life as long as I could, and I just won't have any more."

BRYCE'S hands dropped to his sides as though suddenly devoid of life. His voice was leaden. "Well, I don't see anything I can do. I could leave all this and take you to the city and try to make you happy—but . . . the fact is I sunk every cent I had into this laboratory. I'm in too deep to back out." Bryce straightened, forcing a smile. "Maybe what you need is a vacation, Nadine. I've a little money coming in from some patents, and I'll supply you with what you'll need. Perhaps after a while you'll see things differently."

"Perhaps, Curt." Nadine's voice was a murmur. Her green eyes avoided his.

Bryce placed his hand beneath her chin, raised her face, kissed her lips. "Good-bye, Nadine. Have a good time."

"Good-bye, Curt."

He watched her go, heard the tap-tap of her high heels grow faint, and finally die. There was the roar of the

gyro's motor from the tiny landing field outside. Then that died, too. Bryce sighed, feeling suddenly old.

He sat down on the stool and touched the microscope, but all desire for work had left him. Removing his smock, he left the laboratory, taking the sea-shell path down to the cliffs. The sun was bright and the sky cloudless. A stiff breeze from the ocean whipped against his shirt and trousers. He drew its cool salty fragrance in deep, walking fast.

He could not outwalk the bitter knowledge that he and Nadine had made a mistake—Nadine, gay and fun-loving, and he, the staid, serious-minded robotics engineer. Nadine was a Landrey, a name which had long been synonymous with wealth, but generations of Landreys as gay and fun-loving as she had depleted the family fortune until only the prestige of a memory remained. He, Bryce, had not possessed the advantage of a family tradition, having gained recognition through sheer ability in his chosen line of work. Starting as a raw technician with Vanneman Robots—a pioneer firm in robot manufacture—he had quickly worked his way up to head of the research department, attaining a measure of fame by his invention of a new and improved robot type.

He had met Nadine at a banquet given in his honor by Cyrus Vanneman, famous inventor of the first practical robot and founder of Vanneman Robots. Love was the great leveling agent which had made all differences in heredity and environment seem insignificant. And at that time, intrigued by the novelty of parties and dances, Bryce had not found it difficult to fit into the pattern of Nadine's life. They had been married while still beld in that giddy whirl of entertainment. Then, later, Bryce had again become absorbed in his work to the exclusion

of all else. He had left Vanneman Robots for this laboratory near the ocean, to work on a robot brain which he hoped would lead to a robot type almost human.

Bryce had overcome the most serious difficulties in his work on the Bryce electronic brain. The elusive hand of success had almost been within his grasp—and Nadine had rebelled against the loneliness and seclusion of the life which she had been forced to lead. Bryce wondered if the wealth which his electronic brain was sure to bring would make a difference. A chill of foreboding spread through him as he recalled the lack of response that had been in her farewell kiss.

THE sun was edging its way down toward the horizon when Bryce returned to the house. Jones stood before the entrance to the living room, watching with the expressionless sight-cells that were his eyes. Jones was a Vanneman robot of the latest type, slim-bodied and soft-footed. He served as housekeeper and cook, and was as efficient as he was tireless.

"I was looking for you, Mr. Bryce," Jones said. "Dinner is served."

Bryce nodded. "I went for a little walk."

"I also looked for Mrs. Bryce," Jones said. "I could not find her."

"She went to the city," Bryce explained. "She won't be back for some time."

The implications of Bryce's last words were lost on Jones. He repeated, "Dinner is served," and entered the house, his internal mechanism clicking and humming softly.

Bryce ate a solitary meal, then went to the laboratory and resumed his work. He felt an urgent necessity to do something. He hoped that busy fingers and an occupied mind would bring relief

from thoughts of Nadine. But no amount of concentration could ease the dull ache which throbbed deep within him.

The days passed in bright succession. It was late summer, and the sky was prevailingly blue and clear. Each day was so much like the one preceding that Bryce took no notice of the passing of time. He left the laboratory only for meals, sleeping on a cot in one corner of the room. The electronic brain rapidly neared completion.

Bryce came to accept Nadine's absence with a dull resignation, though he did not cease to miss her. There were times when some phase of his work was of an automatic nature such as not to require his presence. Then he would wander restlessly about the house, or go for walks along the ocean. Once he turned on the television set in the living room, his only contact with the outside world.

There was the usual variety of newscasts. Two major European powers nearing a political crisis. A fourth expedition leaving for Mars. Results of the annual Luna rocket race. And—

"Your reporter has it on good authority that Nadine Bryce, nee Landrey, and Sidney Arthington, wealthy sportsman, are making it a steady twosome. There are rumors current that Nadine Bryce has separated from her husband, Curt Bryce, noted robotics engineer. . . ."

Bryce turned off the set with a vicious twist of his hand. He was breathing hard. *Steady twosome*. . . . The phrase tore at him. He knew a little about Sidney Arthington, who was a celebrity for no other reason than the possession of enormous wealth. Arthington was a playboy—Nadine's kind. He'd fit in nicely with the kind of life Nadine wished to live. A constant round of parties, night-clubs, good times.

Bryce threw himself into his work with redoubled energy. Fall came, and clouds began to fill the blue of the sky. There were occasional squalls, presaging the coming of winter storms, which sent the surf booming against the rocks at the base of the cliffs.

Finally the electronic brain was finished. Tests still had to be made to determine its degree of efficiency. Bryce had a completely-assembled, spare robot body, which he now began to equip with his invention. He was busy with this one gray day, when the sound of an approaching gyro interrupted him.

BRYCE'S visitor was Nadine—a Nadine who looked more lovely, if possible, than when he had last seen her. Bryce took her into the living room, and began to mix drinks with hands that shook. He found it strangely difficult to breathe. His thoughts were anxious. What did Nadine's visit mean? Could it be that she was—coming back to him?

It was a futile hope, he soon realized, for Nadine's manner toward him bore a markedly noticeable constraint. She began with the usual pleasantries.

"How have you been getting along, Curt?"

"Well enough. Jones takes care of everything."

"And the Bryce electronic brain, is it finished?"

"Finished, Nadine. I haven't experimented with it yet, so I don't know how good it's going to be."

"I bet it'll be all right, Curt."

"I hope so, Nadine."

She studied the contents of her glass, running slim fingers along its edge. Her momentary silence had something of a pause for preparation, a drawing of breath before the plunge. Abruptly she looked up.

"Curt, I came to see you about something."

"Yes, Nadine?"

"Curt . . . I want a divorce."

It was not entirely unexpected, but Bryce's stomach climbed a mountain and jumped off. A vast stillness seemed to thicken and press in around him. He stared stupidly at Nadine, and then the stillness was gone. He grew acutely aware of Nadine's eyes upon him, watching his reaction. He raised his glass, emptied it in three great swallows.

"Who's the lucky man, Nadine?" Bryce asked. "There has to be another man, of course."

"Sid Arthington, Curt." Nadine's voice was barely audible.

"Sid, eh? Sid Arthington, the wealthy playboy. Nadine, the playgirl. It'll be a great match."

"Curt . . . Curt, do you have to be this way?"

"No. Lord, no." Bryce pressed the palms of his hands hard against his temples, breathing deeply. He straightened. "Nadine, it hasn't changed with me. I still love you. Won't . . . wouldn't you give me a chance to make up?"

"I'm sorry, Curt."

"Nothing I can say will make a difference?"

"No, Curt."

"If that's the way it is, then that's the way it'll have to be." Bryce shrugged forlornly. "You can have your divorce, Nadine."

"Thanks, Curt," she murmured. She glanced at him, hesitated. "What will you do, Curt? I mean, what are your plans?"

Bryce spread his hands. "I'll remain here, of course, and keep on with my work. That's about all that's left for me to do."

Conversation was a sponge wrung

dry. After a long, awkward silence, Nadine rose. "I'll have to be going, Curt."

"Good-bye, Nadine."

They shook hands, and Nadine walked quickly from the room. Bryce gazed bleakly into nothingness, the sound of the gyro fading in his ears. Then it was gone, and the only sound was the dull thunder of surf on rock. Bryce reached for the liquor bottle, filled a glass, drank it straight. He filled the glass again. And again.

TWO days passed before Bryce returned to work. His movements at first were fumbling and abstracted, but with the threads once more in his hands, the old deftness and precision returned. He completed the nerve hook-ups to his electronic brain, impressed certain simple reflex-patterns onto the memory-cells with the aid of a special micro-film conditioner.

The robot performed smoothly in response to his commands. The electronic brain was undeniably a success.

When the first flush of elation had gone, Bryce gazed thoughtfully at the robot. It was a life-sized figure in the shape of a man, with body and head of spun plastics. Artificial hair, rumpled by Bryce's manipulations, covered its braincase. The robot was almost an exact counterpart of Jones. Jones was a male robot, Bryce remembered. Then, abruptly, an idea made him stiffen tensely. Why not house the electronic brain in a female robot body?

The thought made his heart pound strangely. Not just an ordinary female robot body—but a female robot body that would be the exact counterpart of . . . of Nadine! It would be the perfect solution to his loneliness!

Excitedly, Bryce recalled his possession of a full-length, three-dimensional photograph of Nadine. This could be

enlarged to life-size to serve as a model. And as for the construction of the body itself, who could do it better than the genius that was Cyrus Vanneman?

Hardly had this last passed through Bryce's mind, when he was running eagerly for the vision-phone. He contacted Cyrus Vanneman, explained what he wanted done.

"It'll cost you a fortune," Vanneman said doubtfully.

"I don't care what it costs," Bryce responded. "Listen, I have several patents on the market that are each worth small fortunes in themselves. You know the ones I mean. I'll turn all rights over to you in exchange for this job."

Vanneman seemed to hesitate, then quickly nodded. "I'll do it, Curt."

"Fine. I'll send along plans and specifications in a day or so. This is going to have to be a very special job. The usual system of nerve and brain connections will have to be changed entirely."

"You working on a new idea, Curt?" Vanneman asked curiously.

"In a way," Bryce evaded. "I don't know yet if it'll succeed."

Bryce broke connection and immediately got to work on the plans. After a week of working almost constantly night and day, he was finished. The plans, along with the three-dimensional photograph of Nadine, were then sent to Vanneman.

While working on the plans, Bryce had come to realize that the new robot would not be complete unless it possessed emotions. It would be able to think—actually to reason—but it would not be almost human if its thought processes were not accompanied by such characteristically human emotions as love, hate, jealousy, and fear. In the human body emotions were brought about by various glands, hormones, and

secretions. Bryce intended to obtain the same effect in the robot through the aid of mechanical glands, electrical and radio impulses. And so, while awaiting manufacture and shipment of the robot, Bryce got once more to work.

THE gray days shortened, and the wind from the ocean blew stronger. The occasional squalls became storms, and in between, a dreary veil of fog hung over the cliffs. The thunder of surf breaking on the rocks at the base of the cliffs was almost continuous now.

It was winter, and snow was falling thick and soft when an air van arrived at the landing field outside the house. Bryce's breath caught in his throat as two men carried a large, coffin-like box into the laboratory. His hands shook as he signed the delivery receipt. The knowledge almost frightened him that this was it. This was the culmination of all his work.

The air van left, and Bryce eagerly opened the box, pulled away the layers of padding and wrappings. He gasped. His eyes widened with astonishment, and awe and admiration laxed the muscles of his face.

Working from the plans and the photograph, Vanneman had wrought a miracle. It was Nadine lying there in the box, the thick lashes curling on her cheek as though in sleep. She was a vision of frozen loveliness, a dream made real in spun plastic. Looking at her, Bryce found it hard to believe that wires and cogs and tubes lay beneath the pink-white plastic that was her skin; that a motor, tiny and powerful, could bring her to life instead of the pulsing beat of a heart.

Bryce roused into activity. The electronic brain and the mechanical glands were ready. He completed the robot's assembly with the swift dexterity of a surgeon. Then he turned on her mo-

tor, a very special motor which made scarcely a sound. Her eyes opened, eyes as green as Nadine's, except that they possessed a warmth and softness where Nadine's were cool and faintly appraising. Her red lips parted. She gazed up at him with a kind of child-like wonder on her lovely face.

"You need a name," Bryce told her. "Let it be Lilith. Yes . . . Lilith."

"Lilith," she murmured. "Lilith."

Bryce supervised Lilith's education carefully. He chose from his stock of special micro-films, from television broadcasts, from books. He took great pains to see that everything which went into her memory-cells was of such nature as to result in a personality that would be typically feminine.

Lilith, by virtue of the electronic brain, learned rapidly. In a matter of a few weeks, she knew everything that Nadine had ever known—and some things that Nadine didn't. But where Bryce's expectations were concerned, Lilith as a finished product was as different from Nadine as are black from white and hot from cold. Where Nadine was cool and calculating, Lilith was warm and impulsive. Where Nadine would have smiled, Lilith laughed, and where Nadine would have compressed her lips against an inward sorrow, Lilith wept unrestrainedly. Lilith, of course, possessed tear ducts, having been built to resemble a woman in every detail. She never hesitated to use these, however slight the provocation. She wept over the tribulations of lovers in television plays and death scenes in books. It irritated Bryce at times, yet he could not bear the thought of making the necessary adjustments in her mechanical glands which would change her.

LILITH'S feminine sense of possessiveness was developed to a high

degree. She regarded the house as hers and fussed over it continually, dusting and polishing with a pride and conscientiousness that no human bride in a new home could have equalled. She even insisted on rearranging the furniture to her personal satisfaction, and when Bryce protested vigorously, she took refuge in tears. Bryce gave in. Lilith spent many happy hours hauling and shoving at the furniture in each and every room.

The next thing Lilith insisted on doing was to cook Bryce's meals. He pointed out patiently that this was Jones' task. Lilith promptly demanded Jones' removal. Bryce refused indignantly. Lilith pleaded tearfully. Bryce gave in. He turned off Jones' motor, and left him in a storeroom adjoining the laboratory. Nor was he sorry later, for Lilith put emotion into her cooking, whereas Jones had merely cooked.

Household affairs under Lilith's management progressed smoothly. She kept each room spic and span, and her meals were always something to look forward to. For Bryce the house took on an air of cheerful hominess it had lacked before. He found himself becoming more and more at peace.

Lilith proved to be a gay and charming companion. Bryce taught her to play chess, and she quickly learned to share his love for the game. They spent long hours over the pieces in the living room, and Bryce found Lilith increasingly hard to beat. She also developed an interest in Bryce's work at the laboratory, spending such spare time there as she could find away from her work. Bryce explained the principles of robotics and the functions of various mechanisms used in robot manufacture. Lilith, with her quick mental grasp of any and all subjects, was soon able to discuss intelligently any phase of robotics with Bryce. Far from tol-

erating her presence in the laboratory, he came to look forward to her daily visits with eagerness.

It was inevitable that something should arise to disturb the even tenor of the relationship. They were listening to a television play one evening, which ended in a quarrel between two lovers. Tears filled Lilith's eyes.

"Curt, I wonder if something like that will ever happen to us."

Bryce was puzzled. "What do you mean, Lilith?"

"I wonder if we'll ever quarrel like that."

"But, good Lord, Lilith, why should we?"

Lilith looked away, twisting at her small hands. "That's the trouble with us, Curt. We're really not close enough to each other to have reason to quarrel."

"Maybe we're better off that way," Bryce said.

"Are we, Curt? Are we?" Lilith stood up abruptly. Her face worked against a sudden flood of tears. Turning, she ran from the room.

Bryce stared after her in bewilderment. Then he shrugged philosophically. Lilith was essentially a woman, he reminded himself, and women are often inexplicable.

In the days that followed, Lilith no longer came to the laboratory. She spent most of the time in her room, and her meals lost something of their excellence. At last Bryce could stand it no longer. He caught her in the kitchen one morning, demanded to know what was wrong.

Lilith forced a smile. "Why, nothing's wrong, Curt."

"Yes, there is," Bryce insisted. "I want you to tell me."

Lilith bit her lip, besitating. "All right, Curt, but remember you asked for this. Curt . . . I know I'm only

a robot, but I'm built to resemble a woman in every way. I have a woman's feelings. I love you, Curt. I want to make you happy in the way that only a woman can make a man happy. But . . . well, you don't seem to care."

"I didn't know . . . I hadn't thought—" Bryce was confused.

Lilith watched him, hope dying in her face. She turned away, her green eyes welling. Her slim shoulders shook with muffled sobs.

THOUGHTS whirling chaotically, Bryce left the kitchen. Awareness lay heavy upon him that far from making Lilith almost human, he had made her a bit too much so. Compassion for her filled him, yet sifting his feelings objectively, he could find no reciprocating emotions of love. Though Lilith looked like a glorious young woman—and in fact resembled a glorious young woman in every respect—he could not evade the knowledge that she was, after all, only a robot.

And quite suddenly, Bryce found himself yearning for Nadine. Nadine was human—his kind. The old loneliness returned with abrupt force.

The winter drew to a close. Bryce and Lilith exchanged only a few words together, and then only when occasion demanded. Lilith continued to remain away from the laboratory. She and Bryce no longer played chess together, nor did they listen to television plays. Bryce absorbed himself in his work, and Lilith developed a passion for reading, spending most of the time in her room. Bryce saw her but seldom, yet always he thought he could detect the traces of tears on her cheeks. His eyes grew haunted. He began to wonder how much longer it would keep up.

Spring came, and grass mantled the cliffs. The sun shone warmer each day, the skies cleared, and the bitter wind

from the ocean became a mild breeze.

Bryce, turning on the television set by chance one afternoon, learned that Sidney Arthington had died in a crash of his sporting gyro. The newscaster added that Arthington's immense fortune had been left to Nadine. A short time later, Nadine appeared at the house.

Bryce was overjoyed to see her. It was the answer to his wildest hopes.

"Why, Nadine, I can hardly believe it's you!"

Nadine smiled. "It's me, all right, Curt. How are you?"

"Just fine," Bryce lied. He could not bring himself to admit that the last few months had been pure hell.

Nadine glanced around the living room, frowning slightly. "Curt, the place looks . . . different. What on earth have you been doing?"

"Oh, that's Lilith's work."

"Lilith?" The name hurt out of Nadine. Her eyes widened on Bryce.

"Lilith's a robot," Bryce explained quickly. "Just wait until you see her. The Bryce electronic brain is a success, Nadine, and Lilith is the result."

Nadine looked strangely relieved. She became demure. "Curt, do you know why I'm back?" she asked softly.

"No, Nadine," Bryce answered. But he thought he knew, and his heart skipped a beat.

"Curt, I've decided to come back. That is, if . . . if you still want me."

"Still want you? Why, Nadine—" Bryce reached for her gropingly, and suddenly she was in his arms.

LATER, Nadine patted her hair back into place and smoothed her dress. She said, "We'll have to wait a while, Curt. Appearances, you know. Then we'll be married again. I'm a wealthy woman now, and you can leave your old work, and we can travel and have

friends and fun without worrying about money. It'll be wonderful, won't it?"

Bryce shook his head slowly. "No, Nadine."

"But why not?"

"I wouldn't touch your money, Nadine."

"What difference does it make whose money it is, Curt? It's money, isn't it?"

"I don't care," Bryce insisted. "I won't touch it."

Nadine's face flamed with sudden fury. "Curt, why do you have to be so stiff-necked? I take the risk of killing Sid—" She broke off abruptly, her cheeks paling. Her hand crept to her mouth.

Bryce stared at her as though she had abruptly become something deadly and alien. "What did you say? Nadine—what did you say?"

She returned his gaze mutely, her hand trembling against her lips. Bryce grasped her shoulders hard, shook her urgently.

"Nadine . . . you killed Arthington? But it was an accident! The newscasters said so!"

"Curt! You're hurting me!"

Bryce released her, and Nadine sank into a chair. Her face set in lines of defiance.

"It would have slipped out sooner or later. Now you know—and I don't care!" Her features softened with sudden pleading. She became all tearful, desirable woman. "But, Curt, I did it for you! I never really care for Sid. I married him because he had money. I loved you all along. I kept remembering what you said about working for wealth, influence. I thought, since I was to inherit Sid's fortune, and if he were out of the way, that you could stop working. I decided to get rid of him. I know how gyro's work. I fixed Sid's sportster so that it would go out

of control soon after taking off. The crash destroyed every trace of what I had done. They don't know, Curt. They think it's an accident."

Bryce was stunned at the confession. "Good Lord!" he muttered.

Nadine searched his face anxiously. "Curt . . . you don't hate me?"

"Hate you? No . . . no. Somehow, I can't."

Then Nadine gasped. "Curt, who . . . who's that?" she cried, pointing.

Bryce looked around. Lilith, her hands at her throat, stood in the entrance to the living room, staring incredulously at Nadine.

THE two gazed at each other as though in a trance of hypnosis, identical green eyes wide, identical red lips parted. Except for the dresses they wore, it was hard to tell them apart.

"This is Lilith," Bryce told Nadine. "Lilith, I want you to meet Nadine."

"How do you do?" Lilith murmured coolly. "Pardon me for having intruded." Without another word, she turned and left.

"Why, Curt, she looked just like me!" Nadine exclaimed.

Bryce grinned. "I had her made that way."

Nadine's face abruptly grew hard. "Curt, she must have overheard what I was saying about . . . about Sid. Curt, she knows!"

Bryce felt a sudden apprehension, whether for Nadine or for Lilith, he could not be sure. He knew that each resented their similarity to the other. He'd seen their mutual surprise turn into an instinctive dislike.

Nadine leaned toward Bryce, her green eyes narrowed with insistence. "Curt, she knows what I did! We'll have to get rid of her. I'd never feel safe while she was alive."

"Kill Lilith? Good Lord, no!" Bryce gasped.

"You love me, don't you, Curt?" Nadine demanded softly. "You can't possibly care for her. She's only a robot. She couldn't give you my kind of love."

"But I couldn't kill her!" Bryce said. A thought suddenly struck him. "Nadine—I know what to do. I'll shut off her motor."

"It's no good, Curt," Nadine answered flatly. "Somebody might turn her on again, later. She'd always be a sword hanging over my head. No, Curt, she has to be destroyed."

Bryce could see the logic in Nadine's words. He realized that Lilith, woman-like, would be jealous of Nadine, would do everything in her power to remove her rival. He was chilled by the terrible problem facing him.

Nadine's arms slid around his neck. Her exquisite body pressed close. "Curt, you'll do it, won't you?" she pleaded.

Bryce hesitated achingly. Nadine's lips were turned up to his, soft and red, parted with promise. The perfume of her was a heady fragrance in his nostrils. A refusal struggled to his lips—died unuttered. He pulled Nadine to him, kissed her hungrily. "Yes," Bryce whispered against her cheek. "Yes, I'll do it. . . ."

After a while, Nadine stood up. "I'll have to be going, Curt. I still have many affairs to settle. Take care of the robot as quickly as you can. She mustn't have a chance to inform the police. I'll be back again—soon."

Bryce saw Nadine off at the landing field. Then he returned to the house, numbed by thought of the grim task which lay before him. Somehow, he had to destroy Lilith. His mind quested for some means which would be as painless to her as it would be to himself. Several methods occurred to him.

—but he revolted at each and every one.

Bryce mentally lashed himself for being a sentimental fool. Lilith was only a robot, powered by a motor, made intelligent by an electronic brain. He could make other electronic brains. He could make other robots like Lilith.

Determination came to him. He formed a plan. He'd take Lilith by surprise, turn off her motor. Then he'd remove her brain, hammer it into fragments. As simple as that.

Yet—each time an opportunity arrived, he found himself unable to go through with it. A spring wound to screaming tightness within Bryce as the days passed one by one and the deed remained still unaccomplished. Nadine would be returning soon, he remembered. What would she say when she found Lilith still in existence?

IN AN effort to escape the increasing strain, Bryce went for a long walk over the cliffs one afternoon. It was a warm spring day, and the ocean stretched blue and placid to the horizon.

Returning to the house, Bryce saw Lilith standing at the edge of the cliffs, gazing with a hand shading her eyes, in a direction opposite to his approach. Her back was toward him. Suddenly Bryce knew what he must do. He would sneak up behind her, and then—a swift push, and Lilith would go hurtling over the cliff to her doom on the rocks far below.

Bryce crept from rock to rock, closer and closer. A lump filled his throat. His eyes were blurred. Talons of agony tore at him. And then—he was behind her, and his hands were swinging up for the fatal shove.

Something made her abruptly aware of him. She whirled. For an awful moment, her startled eyes were wide

on his. With a sob, Bryce pushed. Her scream of horror as she went over the cliff sent cold chills up his spine. A dull thud reached him as her body struck the rocks.

It was over. Finished. Reaction set in, leaving Bryce sick and weak. Remorse at what he had done filled him. Lilith was gone—sweet, gentle Lilith who would never have dreamed of hurting anyone, who could not bear the thought of anyone being hurt. Lilith, who had spent long hours with him, playing chess. Lilith, who had been genuinely interested in his work, discussing robotics with him like a veteran technician.

Lilith was gone. Bryce knew he could make other electronic brains, but he knew there would never be another Lilith. The multitude of factors which had gone to make up her personality could never be duplicated.

And suddenly Bryce found himself hating Nadine. He saw her for what she was—selfish, ruthless, addicted to frivolity, a woman who did not hesitate to kill in order to gain her ends. The bitter realization came to Bryce that he had been an utter fool to have killed Lilith for Nadine.

Bryce walked leadenly to the house. He stopped short as he saw a gyro parked on the landing field. He recognized it as Nadine's.

Nadine herself came out of the house as Bryce stood there. She regarded him solemnly, and there were traces of tears on her cheeks. She spoke.

"That woman you called Nadine was here to see you. You were not in, and she went to look for you."

Bryce's mind reeled crazily. Lilith! This was Lilith! Then the other—the one he had pushed over the cliff—had been . . . *Nadine!*

And suddenly Bryce was glad with a gladness that caught at his throat and

filled him with music. Lilith was safe, Nadine's death was justice, in a fashion. It could easily be explained. Nadine had simply wandered too close to the edge of the cliff, slipped, fallen off.

"What is Nadine to you, Curt?" Lilith asked falteringly. "Why . . . why does she look like me?"

Bryce merely smiled. "Forget about her, Lilith. I've been a fool, and I'm

going to try hard to make it up to you. From now on let's think only of us." He held out his arms, and for a moment she stared as though she could not believe their invitation, and then she ran into them blindly. He held her close, and she was as warm and soft as any human girl, sobbing out her happiness against his chest.

THE END

Vignettes

OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Henry

**He did more things with magnets than anyone else in history;
we owe much of electromagnetic science to his inquiring mind**

JOSEPH HENRY, American physicist and scientific administrator, was born in Albany, New York, on December 17, 1797, of Scottish ancestry. Henry attended a country district school until he was thirteen; showing little interest in study, he was apprenticed to a watchmaker. A popular book on natural history picked up in his sixteenth year awoke his ambition so that he resumed his education, attending Albany academy, teaching in country schools and tutoring to pay his way; completing the prescribed course, he continued his studies in chemistry, anatomy and physiology with a view to practicing medicine. An unexpected appointment in 1825 to survey a route for a State road from the Hudson river to Lake Erie changed his goal to engineering, and it was with some reluctance that in 1826 he accepted an appointment to teach mathematics and natural philosophy in the Albany academy.

However, his decision proved a most happy one. Beginning experiments in electromagnetism, Henry was the first to insulate wire for the magnetic coil; he invented the "spool" or "bobbin" winding; he discovered the necessary law of proportion between the electromotive force in the battery and the resistance of the magnet. He thus worked out for the first time the differing functions of two entirely different kinds of electromagnets; the one surrounded by

numerous coils of no great length revolutionized the feeble electromagnet of Sturgeon. The other surrounded by a continuous coil of very great length made possible for the first time the transmission of a current over a great distance with little loss. Every electrical dynamo or motor uses the electromagnet in practically the form in which it was left by Henry in 1829.

The principles involved in the "intensity" magnet constitute the indispensable basis of every form of the electromagnetic telegraph since invented, and Henry himself invented and demonstrated what appears to have been the first practical electromagnetic telegraph in 1830-31 at Albany. It consisted of a mile of copper bell-wire interposed in a circuit between a small Cruikshanks battery and an "intensity" magnet of continuous fine coil. A permanent magnet pivoted to swing horizontally like the compass needle, was arranged so that one end remained in contact with a leg of the soft iron core, while the other end was near an office bell. At each excitation of the electromagnet the suspended magnet was repelled from one leg and attracted by the other, so that its free end tapped the bell. This was the first instance of magnetizing iron at a great distance, or of a suitable combination of magnet and battery being so arranged as to be capable of such action. Reporting his achievements in *Silliman's Journal* in 1831 Henry pointed

out that the way was now clear for the invention of the commercial electromagnetic telegraph. In 1835, after his transfer to Princeton, he added a step in the invention of the "relay" by which a relatively feeble current operated an electromagnet which in turn controlled the local circuit of a more powerful magnet. This invention is extensively used in the field of electrical control, known as distant control.

It was also in 1835 that Henry first used the earth as a return conductor. But in 1829 he had devised and constructed the first electromagnetic motor, an oscillating machine with automatic pole-changer, publishing a description of it in 1831. This machine was the forerunner of all electric motors. In the same period he made two other fundamental discoveries. The honor for the discovery of self-induction which he announced in 1832 has been universally conceded to him, and it was chiefly in recognition of this achievement that the International Congress of Electricians in Chicago in 1893 gave his name to the standard unit of inductive resistance. The other discovery, that of electromagnetic induction, was made independently and at the same period by both Henry and Faraday, and since the latter published first, the credit is rightfully given to him.

In 1832 Henry was appointed to fill the chair of natural philosophy at Princeton. In addition to courses in physics and mathematics he lectured in chemistry, mineralogy, geology; later adding astronomy and architecture. Continuing his physical researches, he discovered that a current of low potential could induce a current of high potential by a suitable arrangement of the coils. He elucidated the laws upon which the electrical transformer of today is constructed. He found, also, that a second induced current could induce a third; the third a fourth; and so on, indefinitely; and that these currents could be induced at a distance. Some of his experiments in induction involved the transmission of electric force without wires through the floors and walls of buildings, and in one case he magnetized a needle by the transmission from a lightning flash 8 miles away. This appears to be the earliest record of the action of ether waves of the type employed in radio telegraphy and telephony today. The discovery of the oscillatory character of the electrical discharge came in 1842. Outside the field of electricity, Henry showed that liquids and solids generally have the same amount of cohesion. He showed, by means of a thermogalvanometer, that sun spots radiate less heat than the general solar surface. He invented a new method for determining the velocity of projectiles. And in 1844 he presented a theoretical paper foreshadowing the principle of the conservation of energy.

In December 1846 the second great period of Henry's life began with his election as first secretary of the newly formed Smithsonian Institu-

tion. The plan of organization which he drew up for it was so far beyond the average intelligence of his day as to meet with bitter opposition. But scientific men turned to the institution as a rallying and guiding center. Under his leadership branches of science heretofore unworked in the United States were taken up; activity in all fields was tremendously stirred; scientific exploration was made a beneficiary of the military exploration and commercial exploitation of the West; the Government's support of scientific activity was enlisted and given direction.

While at Albany, Henry had devoted much attention to meteorology, realizing the need for much more data, and one of his first acts at the Smithsonian was to organize a corps of volunteer observers spread over the continent. He introduced standard instruments from abroad, prepared tables of instructions, and for 30 years maintained the investigations, collecting, reducing and publishing results which now form a considerable portion of the foundation of meteorological science. In this connection he was the first to use the telegraph to transmit weather reports; the first to indicate daily atmospheric conditions on a map; the first to embrace a continent under a single system; the first to make weather forecasts from the data obtained. The success of the Smithsonian meteorological work resulted in the creation of the U. S. weather bureau.

A second main achievement while at the Smithsonian was to supply American science with the first great agency for free publication of results. Of almost equal importance was the system Henry inaugurated of distribution of these publications to libraries and scientific bodies throughout the world. This soon developed into the system of international exchanges by which scientific and later government publications were exchanged between the rest of the world and America through the Smithsonian.

In 1852 Henry became a member of the lighthouse board, serving as chairman from 1871 till his death. This gave him the incentive to make his classical researches on sound in relation to fog signalling which provided his country with the most serviceable system of fog signals known to maritime powers. His researches also enabled the Government to exchange sperm oil for lamp oil and later lamp oil for mineral oil as an illuminant, greatly increasing the efficiency of light beacons. He directed the mobilization of scientific effort during the Civil War and was a prime mover in the organization of the National Academy of Sciences of which he was the second president. He led in the organization of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the Philosophical Society of Washington.

Henry was by general consent the foremost of American physicists; his influence, not only upon the development of scientific work in the United States but upon its character, cannot be overestimated.

Invaders from the



Jim Pollock fired desperately at the menacing figures from the back of his giant lizard

By EDMOND HAMILTON

JIM POLLOCK felt a sudden dizziness that made the sunlit vista of New York Spaceport swirl sickeningly around him. His mouth was dry, and his whole body seemed on

fire with inward flame.

He clutched weakly at a railing for support. In a moment the giddiness passed. But the fiery inward pain persisted. It would rapidly get worse, he

Monster World



There was only one thing that could make Jim Pollock face the awful giants of the monster world—that one thing was . . . soma!

knew. Unless he could get some soma soon, he'd be in a delirium of torment.

Pollock stumbled on across the sun-baked tarmac, along the rows of docked space-ships.

"You've got to do it," he told himself in a dry whisper. "It's the only way, now."

He reached the small ship at the end of the line. It was a battered craft

with unusually large auxiliary fuel-tanks, Pollock noted. On its bows was the name *Ceres*.

A man and a girl were outside it, checking supply cases being carried aboard. The man was a burly, black-browed space officer. The girl was slender, dark, lovely even in a jacket and space-slacks.

"You're the master of this craft?" Pollock asked as the man turned beetling brows upon him.

"I'm Captain Marston," rumbled the officer.

"I heard you need men for an outer-planet voyage, and I'd like to sign on," said Pollock. "I'm an experienced spaceman, first class."

Marston frowned as he stared at Pollock's gaunt young face and haggard eyes.

"You don't look first class to me, mister," growled the officer. "You're thin and pale as a soma-drinker."

Pollock went cold with apprehension. The keen eyes of the captain had come close to his secret.

"I'm all right," he said hastily. "Just finished a hard voyage, that's all."

"Well, we're finding men hard to get, so I guess we'll have to take even you," rumbled Marston, disgustedly. He shoved a slip of paper. "Put your name on this. Outfitting-fee is forty dollars, and we take off at midnight tonight."

Pollock hastily scrawled his name on the slip. His trembling fingers closed upon the money that the captain handed him—the fee given each spaceman before a voyage so that he could get his outfit together.

He had the money! And Slih Drin's soma-joint was only a few blocks away. In a few minutes, he'd be able to ease the fiery torment that had been racking his body for the whole last week.

But the girl interfered. With a little frown in her clear brown eyes, she

stepped forward.

"Just a moment," she said. "Captain Marston, I told you that you must clearly inform each man signed on just where we're going."

The burly officer protested loudly. "If we do that, Miss Graham, we'll never get a full crew together!"

The girl insisted. "It's not fair to take men without telling them our destination. Go ahead."

"Oh, all right," growled the burly officer. He told Pollock harshly, "The destination of this tub is Neptune. I suppose you want to back out now."

Pollock, itching to get away from them, hastily shook his head. "No, that's all right. Neptune is all right with me."

Marston seemed astounded. The girl too looked surprised.

"Are you sure you understood?" she asked Pollock. "We're heading for Neptune itself. It's dangerous—since you're a spaceman, you must know that no ship has ever yet come back from a landing on Neptune."

She went on. "I'm Eve Graham. My brother Alan led an expedition to Neptune some months ago. He didn't come back, any more than other ships ever did. What happened to him on that foggy world, I don't know. But I'm going there and find out. We may never come back, either. And I don't want to take crew-men who don't realize the danger of it."

Pollock felt the dizziness coming over him again. He only half heard her earnest explanation. He must get out of here quickly, to Slih Drin's—

What did he care what the destination of the ship might be? He wasn't going on it. He'd only signed on for the outfitting-fee, and what it meant to him. But he had to keep playing his part.

"Thanks for warning me, Miss Gra-

ham," he husked. "But I'm not afraid."

"Then that's that," said Marston hastily. "You be here an hour before midnight, Pollock."

POLLOCK touched his cap, and turned away. He knew they were having a hard time getting a crew for such a voyage, and that Marston wanted to take no chance of his changing his mind.

His legs felt wobbly as he hurried back across the spaceport. The fiery pain in his body was getting worse by the minute. Everything was blurring around him.

He noticed passersby who looked at him curiously. He knew what a figure he must present, with his haggard eyes and shaking hands. Bitterly he thought of himself, only two years before, a clear-eyed, stalwart young second officer with a bright future. And now—

No time to think of all that now! He was already making his way through the ruck of shabby streets to the disreputable establishment in which Slih Drin conducted his illicit soma-traffic.

He had to knock twice before Slih Drin let him in. The bald, red-skinned Martian looked at him suspiciously.

"You get not one drink of soma unless you can pay for it!" he warned Pollock immediately.

"I can pay," husked Pollock, shoving the money at him. "Give me the stuff, Slih."

The Martian delayed maddeningly to count the bills. Then, mollified, he went into the back of his shabby apartment.

He returned with a plastic flask. Pollock broke the seal and poured the scarlet, foaming liquid into a tumbler. As he raised it to his lips, the characteristic pungent odor of the soma met

his nostrils.

Soma, the most beneficent and also the most maleficent drink in the System! This product of subtle Martian chemistry was the most perfect pain-anaesthetic known. But also, if drunk too often, it could become a more tyrannical master than Earth alcohol. It could turn men into confirmed soma-drinkers. Pollock knew—he *was* one.

The pungent stuff poured down his throat. He sat down shakily upon a cot. And within a few minutes, a blessed warmth and peace began to steal through his pain-racked body.

Pain washed out of his fibers. Sleep stole upon him. And with the sleep, came the gorgeous "soma-dreams."

He was a free mind, travelling in space at tremendous velocity. He rushed past violet and copper suns, past spinning worlds of beauty and horror incredible, past racing comets and through the fiery glow of great nebulae.

He seemed to soar at will across the stupendous arc of the Milky Way, treading upon a sky spattered and spangled with thousands of suns. He vaulted up from the galactic universe, and plunged down again through the great drift of swarming stars.

From dream to gorgeous dream, Pollock passed without sensation of time. He was deep in the soma-dreams when there came vaguely a jarring, remote sound of scuffling, of a rude entrance, of a harsh, angry voice.

"Damned weakling! I *knew* you were a soma-drinker when I looked at you. And I knew I'd find you in one of these joints."

Where did that discordant voice come from, Pollock wondered vaguely? It didn't matter. He was drifting on through a magnificent vision of sky-rocketing suns and seething worlds.

But the angry voice again impinged on his dimmed consciousness, though

still very faintly. And he had a remote sensation of someone violently shaking his numb body.

"Wake up, damn you! You signed on for a voyage, and by Heaven, you're going on it!"

Pollock's dream-drowned mind paid little attention. It didn't matter how his body was shaken or slapped. He couldn't feel it.

He could hardly even feel the sensation of being dragged somewhere, through streets to a busy, noisy place, and up a short incline.

He knew that he had been slammed down on a metal floor, because the coolness of it dimly reached him. But that was all he knew.

Vaguely, he heard the harsh, deep voice storming. "—wouldn't have brought the cursed fellow, only we're so short-handed already that we'll need even this soma-drinker."

Pollock remotely heard the voice of a girl answer, with dismay and disgust in her tones. He was drifting off again into dreams.

A little later, there penetrated his multi-colored visions a sound that his subconscious recognized as the slam of a space-ship's airlock door. Then, very quickly, came a bursting roar. He felt a remote sensation of being powerfully pressed downward. Then the dreams completely claimed him.

CHAPTER II

POLLOCK awoke with a thick brown taste in his mouth, and a throbbing headache. He lay stupefiedly looking up at the metal bunk a few inches above his face.

Whirr-r-r!

It was the buzzer that signalled the change of watch on a space-ship. It had awakened him, even from his soma hangover.

"Good God!" he muttered, looking appalledly around.

He was in the crew-room of a space-ship. A half dozen other men, hard-bitten Venusians, Earthmen, Martians, were clambering sullenly out of their bunks.

This ship was in space. It didn't need the porthole of blazing stars to tell Pollock that. The steady drone of rocket-tubes building up velocity, the creak and quiver of the vessel, was enough.

Frantically, he tried to orient himself. What was this ship? He vaguely remembered signing on with some craft, to get the outfitting fee. But he had gone straight with it to Slih Drin's, for soma—

He buttonholed a squat, brawny Venusian spaceman. "What ship is this?" he stammered.

The Venusian guffawed. "Listen to that, boys! This punch-drunk soma-drinker doesn't even know what ship he's on."

"We're all punch-drunk or we wouldn't be on her," whined a tall, cadaverous red Martian. He told Pollock, "You're on the *Ceres*, Earthman. And the destination is Neptune. How do you like that?"

"Neptune?" Pollock was stunned. "But nobody goes to Neptune—"

Then he dimly remembered. There had been a girl, when he signed on—a girl who had made the captain tell him that their destination was the foggy planet of mystery.

He remembered her, now. Eve Graham, her name had been. And she had been forming an expedition to go in search of her brother—to Neptune.

Pollock's raw nerves rippled with panic. He felt caught in a dreadful trap. This ship would be in space for weeks. That meant that he'd be weeks without soma.

Weeks without soma! He knew only too well what that would mean. It would make him a tortured thing, a walking agony.

"I've got to get off!" he cried hoarsely. "They've got to put this ship back!"

A swarthy Mercurian cyc-man laughed harshly. "Hear that, Lor Ow?" he said to the squat Venusian. "Tell the old man we've got to put right back to Earth."

Pollock paid no attention to their gibing. He was too shaken with dread, too panicky. He hastened unsteadily after them as they started up the stairs to the top deck.

BRIGHT, hot sunlight slashed through the glassite wall sections to light the top deck. A red-faced first officer snarled at them as they emerged.

"What do you space rats think this is—a pleasure cruise? Next time you hear that buzzer, get up here in ten seconds."

Pollock paid no heed. He saw two figures farther along the deck. One was a girl, slim in space-slacks. He recognized Eve Graham.

The other was Marston, the captain. Pollock plunged past the first officer toward the burly, black-browed captain.

"Captain Marston, there's been a mistake!" he babbled hoarsely. "I can't go on this voyage. You've got to put me off at Mars."

Marston bent a harsh glance on Pollock's white, twisted face. "You signed on yesterday, didn't you?"

"Yes, but—," Pollock began desperately.

"But you were only after the outfitting-fee, to buy soma with, eh?" thundered the captain.

"I thought I could repay it to you later," Pollock admitted miserably.

"Well, you have another think coming," snapped Marston. "I pulled you

out of that soma-joint, and you're going with us all the way, and you're going to earn every cent of your pay."

Eve Graham was looking at Pollock's shaking figure and white face with a certain repulsion. He paid no attention to her.

"You can't take me with you!" he cried desperately. "I can't go that long without soma. You've got to put me off or—"

Whack! Marston's balled fist hit his jaw and he staggered back against the deck wall. His head rang from the blow.

"Get up and get to your station!" roared the hurly captain. "You'll do your work on this ship, soma-drinker or not!"

Eve Graham intervened distressedly. "Please, captain—"

Marston turned toward her. "Sorry, Miss Graham—but you hired me to run this ship and you'll have to let me do it my way. I know how to handle scum like that, and it's the only way."

The captain's black eyes bored into the sullen group of spacemen who had watched the scene.

"You can all chew on that," he rapped. "You're the crummiest crew I ever took off with, and you may think you're tough, but by God, you'll find out that I'm a lot tougher if you don't step. That's all. Mr. Harker, get them to work."

HARKER, the red-faced first officer, snapped his orders. "You'll form the Number Two watch. Lor Ow and Thubar, pilot and helmsman. Kinnel, Braho, Thorpe and Xaxar, cyc-room. Stacy and Pollock, deckhands. Get moving!"

Pollock's head was threatening to burst. The combined effects of soma hangover and that whack on the chin threatened to overcome him.

But the vicious lash of the first officer's voice drove him to work. He and Stacy, an old, wrinkled Earthman, started swabbing down the glassite deck-walls of the moisture that had condensed upon them.

Pollock wielded his swab clumsily, his hands feeling like lead, his legs twisting under him. He knew that gradually the hangover would pass. But in a few days would come the first craving for soma, stealing through his body, bringing the twitching ache and then the fiery pain that only the Martian anaesthetic drink could ease.

Old Stacy was looking at him quizzically. "Feelin' pretty peaked, ain't you? I've seen soma-drinkers before. I done a lot of fool things in my thirty years in space, but I wasn't never fool enough to monkey with that devil's drink."

"I know, I'm a fool and a weakling," Pollock muttered bitterly. "Enough people have told me so. You needn't rub it in."

"I wasn't meanin' to ride you about it, boy," said the old spaceman apologetically. "There ain't no angels in this crew. No decent spaceman would sign on for a trip to Neptune. They had to take men that no other ship would have."

He continued garrulously. "That Martian, Thumar, was black-listed two years ago for a barratry plot. Xaxar, that waspish little Mercurian, killed somebody on his home-world and can't ever go back there. I've got an idea that Lor Ow and the other Venusian are on the dodge too, but they don't say much. And as for me—well, what other ship would sign on a spaceman as old as I am?"

And the old man cackled. Pollock hardly heard him. His mind was still swimming with the appalling realization of his predicament.

Mechanically, he swabbed along the starboard deck-walls. The vacuum swab trembled in his unsteady hands. He looked up, to find Eve Graham watching him with a shadow of mixed pity and repulsion in her eyes.

Pollock felt a dull resentment, in which was shame. He knew what he must look like to the girl—a shaking, white-faced wreck. He was glad when Lewis, the cleancut, youthful second officer, came off duty and eagerly engaged her attention.

Pollock reeled from exhaustion when the watch finally ended. He staggered down to the crew-room and tumbled into his bunk, lying like one dead.

The hellish clamor of the watch buzzer seemed to awake him almost immediately, though he had slept hours. Yet he felt a little steadier and stronger now. The soma hangover was passing off.

He glanced through the deck wall when he reached topside. Earth was already several million miles astern, a greenish blob receding across the fringe of the Sun's glaring halo.

The red speck of Mars lay far to the right. The star-woven tapestry of the firmament stretched solemn and magnificent across the void into which the old *Ceres* throbbed and creaked and groaned.

He noted the tiny green spark of far-away Neptune. It scarcely interested him. That remote planet of foggy mystery and menace to which they were bound was of little importance to Pollock, compared to his own dire personal situation.

Eve Graham stood at the deck-wall with Captain Marston, looking toward Neptune and talking earnestly.

"—can locate the radium deposits, we'll surely find Aian's ship somewhere near them," he heard the girl saying anxiously.

Old Stacy heard more, and relayed his information to the rest of the crew below decks on the next off-watch.

"Seems like this here Alan Graham, the girl's brother, went to Neptune after radium, an' he never come back," said the old spaceman.

"A fool's errand," spat Thubar, the tall Martian. "The fellow must have been space struck."

Old Stacy dissented. "There's radium on Neptune—the astronomers have known that for years. The planet shows it in the telespectroscope."

"Sure, there's radium there—everybody's heard that," Lor Ow grunted. "And how many men have lost their lives trying to get it? Twenty-odd ships have rocketed for Neptune, and not one has ever come back."

Xaxar, the little Mercurian, muttered superstitiously, "The Jovians say there's something ghastly out on Neptune."

"Bah, they tell those stories about every world," scoffed Stacy. "How would anyone know what's on Neptune, when nobody's ever come back from there?"

Pollock listened no longer, for he was already sinking into a slumber of sheer exhaustion. Again it seemed that he only slept a few moments before the buzzer awakened them for the next watch.

POLLOCK dragged through day after day of it. He was soft and flabby from months of idleness. And the soma had taken its toll of his strength. Already, by the time a week went by, the craving was coming back to him. His nerves were beginning to twitch from the longing.

They were well out beyond the orbit of Jupiter, now. Few ships ventured farther—an occasional trader to the new colonies on Saturn, a mapping ex-

pedition to prospect for metals on Uranus, but nothing more. Some day, pioneering Earthmen would make this region as well known as the inner planets. But that was still in the future.

And as the *Ceres* forged on and on into the vast emptiness, past even the orbit of Uranus on its steady course toward the green mystery world of the System, the motley crew became daily more uneasy. Their fears were continually fanned by Lor Ow.

"It's crazy to go on when not one ship has ever come back from Neptune! It'd be better to seize the ship and turn back to Saturn."

"Still thinkin' about mutiny?" drawled old Stacy. "You ought to know better. Maybe you'd like System law after you."

"System law doesn't run beyond Jupiter," the squat Venusian retorted. "We'd be safe enough in the frontier towns of Saturn."

"You'd never get there," snorted the old spaceman. "Mutiny on a spaceship these days is impossible. Only the officers carry atom-guns."

Pollock had paid little attention to the argument. Lying in his bunk, trying to conquer his quivering nerves, he felt that he could stand it no longer. He *had* to have soma, and at once.

He went up to the top deck, looking for the captain. Marston was there, talking with Eve Graham as they looked toward the growing green disk of Neptune. Pollock hated to speak before the girl, but he did.

"I'm in bad shape, sir," he husked to the captain. "If I could have just one drink of soma from the medicine chest—"

Marston stared at him implacably. "I was expecting this. And the answer is no. You don't get a drop of the stuff."

Pollock's face was white. "But I've

got to have some soon. If I don't, it means death."

"You soma-drinkers all say that, but I don't believe it," the captain answered brutally. "You'll stage no soma-drunks on this ship."

Pollock, sick from the shuddering of his nerves, felt frustrated and doomed as he went back down to the crew-room. He was startled to find old Stacy lying senseless on the floor. And Lor Ow had a heavy cyc-wrench in his hand.

He stared bewilderedly around the brutal faces of the crew. "What's this?"

"It's mutiny," snapped Lor Ow. "We're not going any farther toward Neptune—we're seizing the ship right now! We'll grab the officers in a few minutes when the watch changes, and then head back toward Saturn."

"That's where you come in, Pollock," he went on swiftly. "We've got to have a navigator to lay our course back to Saturn. We know you were an officer once. For navigating for us, you'll get the soma in the medicine-chest."

FOR a moment, for just a moment, Pollock's tortured nerves thrilled with the wild hope of relief. The soma in the chest would last him all the way back to Saturn. It would be a blessed release from agony.

Six years before, an Earth youngster had spent long months in the space-officers' academy, learning the discipline and traditions of the void. It was the ghost of that youngster that clamored from inside Pollock now.

"I'll have no part in mutiny, even for soma!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

He leaped back toward the companionway. The officers had to be warned immediately.

"Don't kill him!" rasped Lor Ow's voice from behind him. "We'll need him."

A wrench crashed on Pollock's head

and he fell dazed upon the stairs. As his brain swam in darkness he vaguely heard the whirr of the watch-buzzer and then the feet of the men hurrying up the steps past him.

The crashing blasts of atom-guns topside roused him from his daze. He staggered up to the deck, to witness an appalling sight.

Young Lewis, the second officer, lay prostrate and Lor Ow had his atom-pistol and was firing it at Harker, just emerging from the bridge-room forward.

The red-faced mate pitched forward. Xaxar darted to snatch up his gun. But as the Mercurian did so, he tumbled dead. Marston, his massive face terrible, had appeared and shot him from the bridge-room door.

Pollock glimpsed Eve Graham beyond the captain, and the white face of the Venusian pilot as he turned his head. Lor Ow had his atom-pistol levelled at Marston's breast.

Pollock leaped. He got his arms around Lor Ow, the moment before the squat Venusian mutineer pulled trigger.

"Get this soma-crazy fool off me!" snarled the Venusian to Thubar and the other mutineers who were running forward.

His gun-blasts crashed out as he shouted. But, with Pollock on his back, his aim went wild. The blast grazed Marston's shoulder, hit the pilot in the back, and flung him across his panel of firing-studs.

Next instant came the shock of a thunderous explosion from below decks. Pollock was torn from his hold by the wild lurching of the *Ceres*. He caromed against the deck-wall.

"Get that gun!" yelled Lor Ow.

Marston, his right shoulder scorched, had dropped his weapon. Thubar darted with snake-like swiftness and got hold of it first.

"That does it!" exclaimed Lor Ow jubilantly. "The ship's ours, men! Marston, you and Miss Graham get back against that wall. You too, Pollock!"

"Better kill them all now," said Thubar. "Then ho for Saturn!"

Marston, holding his wounded shoulder as he stood with Eve and Pollock, said grimly, "You fools are now as good as dead, yourselves."

He jerked his head toward the bridge-room where the dead pilot lay across the controls.

"That wild shot of yours that got the pilot, fixed the ship. You'll never see Saturn," said the captain.

"What do you mean?" snapped the Venusian.

As though to answer him, a wild-eyed, dishevelled cyc-man stumbled up onto the deck. It was Kinnel, one of Lor Ow's cronies.

"The cyclotrons let go!" he habbled. "The whole cyc-room crew is dead except—"

He fell. They saw then that his lips and nostrils were blackened by the wave of superheated air that he had breathed.

"Your doing, Lor Ow," said Marston harshly. "The pilot's body pressing all the firing-studs at once put too much strain on the cycs and they blew. This is a dead ship."

There was an appalled silence. Instinctively, the mutineers turned and looked through the glassite wall.

Neptune's green disk lay dead ahead, still far away but seeming ominously big and bright as the crippled, silent *Ceres* rushed toward it.

"You've got just one chance for life," snapped Marston. "None of you men have the technical knowledge to rebuild a wrecked cyc. We officers have, and could maybe do it before we all crash on Neptune. Hand over those guns

and agree to stand trial when we return, and I'll try."

Lor Ow snarled viciously. "Not a chance, Marston! We'll make you repair those cycs!"

"How?" demanded the captain coolly. "By threatening us with death? You mean to kill us anyway. That threat won't work."

Thubar looked anxiously at the ring-leader. The Martian muttered, "What are we going to do? We're heading on toward Neptune, and we'll sure crash there if we don't get the power going."

CHAPTER III

LOR OW'S flat face showed a sudden gleam of triumph as he looked at Pollock.

"We don't need Marston and the others," he declared. "Pollock was an officer once and he knows cyc-construction. He'll fix them for us."

Pollock said heavily, "No. I'll not help you. I know very well you intend to kill me too in the end, for taking sides against you."

"Oh, yes, you will help us," the Venusian said confidently. "I know a way to make you."

He turned to Thubar. "Get whatever soma there is in the medicine chest."

Then he looked back at Pollock and laughed. "I know you soma-drinkers. When you get the jitters bad enough, you'll do anything for the stuff. If we keep a glass of soma sitting in front of you a few hours, you'll be glad to repair the cycs to get it."

Pollock's heart sank. For he well knew that the cunning plan of the Venusian to play upon his weakness would be successful.

He couldn't long resist the soma for which his whole body cried out. He might stand it at first, but sooner or

later his will would weaken and he would surrender.

Thubar came back, looking puzzled. "There isn't any soma in the medicine chest."

"There must be," snapped Lor Ow. "Every ship carries some, to use as anaesthetic in case of accidental injuries."

Marston interrupted. "There's no soma on the *Ceres*. I threw all we had out into space, just a little while before your mutiny started."

The burly captain glanced at Pollock. "He had been pestering me for the stuff. I knew he was desperate enough to steal it from the chest and go into a soma-drunk for days. So I tossed it out."

Rage showed in Lor Ow's eyes. "Laughing at me, are you? Will you laugh when I start blasting you all down?"

"You can't do that, Lor!" exclaimed one of the mutineers anxiously. "We can never get those cycs going without them."

"My terms still stand," Marston said calmly. "Surrender the atom-guns and obey orders, and I'll see that you all get a fair trial when we get back. Since you were lucky enough not to kill anybody, you'll probably get off with a life sentence in Lunar Prison."

"I'll see you damned first!" flashed the Venusian.

He stood for a few moments, his flat face deadly, his finger tightening on the trigger of the atom-pistol.

Pollock watched with dull disinterest. A blast of that gun would at least save him from a death more terrible—the death of a soma-drinker deprived of the Martian liquor.

And *that* death was inevitable, now. The soma that had been tossed out into space by Marston had taken his last bope with it.

"I won't kill you, yet," said Lor Ow finally. "I'll give you a little time to think it over."

His eyes glanced at Eve Graham's pale face. "I especially want you to think of Miss Graham's precarious position in this ship."

Pollock felt a surge of disgust and fury at the ugly implied threat. "You damned space-scum!"

But Eve remained unshaken. She said calmly, "don't let them threaten you through me. If they touch me, I shall kill myself."

"Take them down and lock 'em up in Number One store-room," Lor Ow gave order. "Post two men outside the door. We'll see what we can do with the cycs ourselves. Maybe we won't even need their help."

MARSTON and Pollock and Eve were herded roughly down below decks, to the empty store-room. Presently the wounded Harker, and young Lewis and Stacy, were carried in. The door was locked and they heard mutineers post themselves on guard outside it.

Stacy and Lewis, who were only stunned, soon came around. But Harker had taken a gun-blast through his ribs and was in serious condition. With the medical supplies Lor Ow had allowed them, Eve treated the mate's scorched wound and made him comfortable as possible.

Then she turned to the others. Marston was looking grimly from the tiny porthole window. But Pollock had sat heavily down.

He was feeling the torture of soma-craving nerves more strongly than before, now that the excitement had passed. He felt sick, shivering.

"What are our chances, captain?" Eve asked quietly.

Marston shrugged, wincing as the

movement pained his shoulder. "We've got just the one chance. The mutineers can't repair those wrecked cyscs, but we maybe could."

He explained. "A cyclotron is an intricate scientific apparatus. An ordinary crew-man can keep one running as long as nothing goes seriously wrong with it.

But he hasn't the technical knowledge to tear it down or rebuild it. A space-officer is trained to do just that."

He nodded toward the vista of starry space that lay outside the little window.

"We're moving by inertia now, at very high speed. The *Ceres* will hit Neptune in four days. Unless its cyscs are rebuilt to give it power to decelerate, it'll crash and end us all. The mutineers know that."

"Yes, but Lor Ow ain't goin' to give in 'less he has to," warned old Stacy. "That Venusian is bad medicine. I think he only signed on with this ship 'cause he an' his pals figured all along to seize it an' use it for a pirate craft on the frontier."

The old spaceman shook his gray head sorrowfully. "I tried to warn you when I realized it was really mutiny, but they got me first."

"Thanks anyway for trying," Marston rumbled. He looked at Pollock and added, "I'm grateful to you too, Pollock. You saved me from a gun-blast through the heart when you jumped on the Venusian."

Pollock looked up at him haggardly. "Captain, did you really toss the medicine-chest soma out into space? Or were you just telling them that?"

Marston's massive face tightened. "I did it, all right. And you'll be better off without it."

Pollock made no answer. What was the use? he thought dully. They couldn't realize the hellish agony to which he was condemned.

Marston burst out. "I'm damned if

I can understand you, Pollock. You fought up there like a real man. Yet you don't make any real attempt to fight this cursed soma-drinking habit."

Eve looked at Pollock with distress in her clear brown eyes. "I've heard of soma-drinkers who managed to quit. Couldn't you?"

He looked at her haggardly, but made no answer. What good would it do to reply that the few drinkers who had quit soma had not been drinking the stuff as long as he had?

"He isn't worth bothering with, Miss Graham," said Marston disgustedly. "Only a weakling would start drinking soma in the first place."

That stung Pollock to retort. "If you want to know, it was just such a loud, swaggering space-captain as you who started me drinking soma!"

He told them bitterly, "Two years ago I was second officer on a freighter bound from Saturn to Earth. I was injured in a tube-explosion aboard ship. My captain should have put in at Mars to leave me for hospitalization.

"But putting in at Mars would add nearly a week to his Saturn-Earth time, and ruin his precious efficiency record with the company. So he kept right on to Earth, and kept giving me soma to keep me from going out of my head with pain."

He shrugged heavily. "By the time I finally reached an Earth hospital, I'd been for twenty days on soma. And I found when I left the hospital that I couldn't get off it."

"Why, then it isn't your own fault at all!" Eve Graham exclaimed warmly.

"Bah, these soma-drinkers can always prove that it's not their own fault," said Captain Marston intolerantly.

Pollock smiled bitterly. "That's right, captain. That's just what the Board said when they cancelled my

officer-rating."

YOUNG LEWIS had been listening at the door. The second officer now turned toward them excitedly.

"Listen, there's something going on in the ship!" he reported.

They were all silent, listening. There came through the ventilator-tubes a dim, confused din of hammering on metal and loudly disputing voices.

"They're working on the cycs," said Marston. "Trying to repair them themselves."

Old Stacy's wrinkled face lengthened. If they get 'em repaired, they won't bother keepin' us alive very long."

For hour after hour, the hammering din continued. It was the only sound as the *Ceres* rushed silently on through the void.

There was no break in the monotony for the prisoners except that twice during the next forty-eight hours, the door was unlocked and an armed mutineer shoved in food and water.

Pollock was too sick and shaken by the increasing soma-craving to touch either. His whole body thirsted for the Martian liquor.

Marston strode back and forth in their prison like a caged lion. "They'll never get those cycs fixed," he rasped. "But unless we get a chance at them soon, we won't have time to fix them before the ship crashes on Neptune."

More hours dragged by. They could hear the distant sounds of repair-work frequently interrupted by loud and angry disputes.

Lewis looked at his watch, then out into space. "We'll hit Neptune in less than forty eight hours, at this speed."

Eve Graham looked inquiringly at Marston. "Do you think you ought to give in and help them?" she asked anxiously. "If we crash, it not only means

death to us—it means the last hope of finding and saving my brother is gone."

Pollock, sitting and fighting the screaming of his nerves, told her dully: "It wouldn't help any to give in. Lor Ow would kill us all the minute the ship was in working shape."

"Pollock's right," snapped the burly captain. "We'll hold out, and if we have to die, those scum will die with us."

A silence had fallen while they talked, all sounds of work having halted. The *Ceres* rushed soundlessly on toward death.

Then the door of their prison was opened. Lor Ow and Thubar and most of the other mutineers stood outside it. The weary faces of the mutineers showed that they had been engaged in intensive toil.

The squat Venusian ringleader said quietly, "Marston, you win. We've found that we can't rebuild the cycs ourselves. You'll have to do it."

"My conditions still stand," the captain answered. "Hand over your weapons, and agree to return and face your trial. Only then will we start work on the cycs."

"All right, it seems we have no choice," Lor Ow said. "Here's my gun. Thubar, give him yours. The others are still in the locker."

To Pollock, there was something suspicious in the readiness with which Lor Ow had suddenly surrendered.

Marston also seemed to suspect a trick, for he took the two atom-pistols and fired a test-blast from each down the corridor outside.

"Thought you might just be clever enough to give us useless guns," he said harshly to Lor Ow. "But these are all right."

He handed one of the weapons to Lewis, and they led the way to the top deck. Marston's first act was to in-

spect and then lock up the other atom-pistols, after giving Stacy and Pollock each one of them.

The Captain's bleak gaze swept the mutineers, then. "We may, or may not, pull out of this. If we do, you'll all face a space-court. But obedience to orders from now on will count in your favor. Any man who disobeys will get short shrift now."

The mutineers took this silently. But Pollock thought he detected a lurking gleam of mockery in Lor Ow's flat face.

His suspicions increased. But how could there be any trick? They themselves now possessed the only atom-guns on the ship.

"We'll obey orders, hut for space's sake get the cys going!" pleaded Thubar worriedly. "Look how near we are to Neptune!"

THROUGH the bridge window, Neptune was indeed an appalling sight. Its cloudy green globe seemed to fill half the firmament. And the *Ceres* was rushing silently and ever more swiftly down toward the mystery planet.

Marston checked their position rapidly by means of the space-sextant, and then noted their speed. He computed, frowning.

"About forty hours before we hit Neptune," he muttered. "It's not much. Let's see what the cys look like. You come too, Pollock."

When they went down to the cyc-room, an exclamation of despair came from young Lewis at the first glance.

"They're all hopelessly wrecked! We'll never repair *these* in forty hours!"

The six massive, spool-shaped cyclotrons that were the *Ceres'* source of atomic power were a complete wreck. The sudden simultaneous firing of all rocket-tubes had put too great a load

on the power pipes, and they had back-blasted into the cys, which had promptly exploded.

Pollock, his trained eye running over the ruined mechanisms, silently agreed with the pessimism of the young second officer. But the dark outlook hardly added to the hopelessness of his own agonizing personal predicament.

"We can't rebuild all six cys in that time, I agree," rapped Marston. "But two of them would give enough power for the bow-tubes, and enable us to decelerate speed enough to check our fall."

He continued crisply. "We'll try to rebuild Number One and Two by salvaging parts from the other four. Lewis, straightened out the tools. Pollock, I'll need you to help us."

Lor Ow and his followers had made blundering attempts to repair the mechanisms, but had succeeded in little more than reducing the cyc-room to confusion.

Pollock set to work with the captain to dissemble the four rear cyclotrons. The task was a difficult one, the bolts strained and joints started by the explosion. And the tools slipped in his nerveless hands, his movements were clumsy and uncertain.

It had been two years since he had worked on a cyc. And in his present condition, the soma-thirst tearing at his nerves and brain, he felt totally unable to assist in this exacting work.

"Don't twist that injector-tube!" snarled Marston, sweating. "Can't you see your wrench slipped off the coupling?"

"My fingers are all thumbs," Pollock said thickly.

He felt like dropping the tools, giving up the hopeless attempt. But ingrained tradition would not permit him to do that.

And his mind still held one faint hope

for soma, if they could reach Neptune safely. Alan Graham's ship, which had never returned, must still be there. And every ship carried soma in its medicine-chest!

IT TOOK them twelve hours to tear down the wrecked cys. And then they found there were not enough undamaged parts for two cyclotrons.

"We'll have to use the atomic welders to reshape these strained injectors and make new couplings," sweated Marston. "I don't know——"

Their work had become a terrible race against time, as the *Ceres* rushed closer to the giant green sphere of the foggy planet.

Pollock's dazed mind hardly apprehended the passage of time. His fingers dropped tools and could not pick them up. He staggered drunkenly.

"Give up!" shrieked his brain. "You're going to die anyway from lack of soma. There's no real hope of finding any on Neptune!"

And yet he could not surrender, not while Marston and Lewis were toiling madly on, not while Eve Graham's wide eyes watched them.

"Only ten hours till we crash—it's hopeless!" muttered Stacy.

Pollock hardly heard, for he was helping Marston bolt in the injector on the second of the two cys they had rebuilt.

"Both cys ought to run now," Marston said hoarsely. "We'll take time only to connect them to the bow and keel rockets."

That required an hour more of work. Only nine hours were left in which to decelerate the ship, as Marston led the way to the bridge.

Marston took the pilot-chair, started the cys. They droned irregularly, then strengthened to steady power.

"Strap in, all of you!" Marsh called

over his shoulder. "The deceleration I'll have to use will smash you to butter if you don't."

Neptune was a terrifying spectacle, from here in the bridge. A colossal, cloudy green globe that bulked across almost all space ahead of them, and cast a weird viridescent light through the window upon them.

Lewis hurried back to strap the wounded Harker into his hunk, and the crew sought their own hunks. But Eve Graham stayed in the bridge.

"If—if we crash, I want to be here," she said steadily.

Pollock helped her strap into one of the recoil-chairs in the bridge, and got into another himself. He was exhausted, his brain spinning.

Crash! Crash! Marston was firing the bow rockets with reckless disregard for the safety factor. The thrust-struts of the *Ceres* screeched beneath the braking action. Each shock tore Pollock's soma-tortured nerves.

The ship slowed down, hour by hour. Yet it was still rushing at far too great a speed down toward the giant green planet.

Scree-e-e! The thin shriek of Neptune's upper atmosphere outside the hull finally penetrated through the daze that had gripped Pollock. Marston, his massive face sweating and terrible, fired the bow tubes again.

Down into a green, weird universe of curling mists the space-ship was slanting. Parting atmosphere roared louder outside the hull.

"We may make it if we can find a place to land down in that fog!" cried the captain. "Turn on the radio-sonde!"

Pollock switched on the radio-sonde, whose impulses were projected downward and reflected back up again to indicate their exact altitude above the solid surface of the planet. He called the

readings boarsely.

"Forty thousand feet—thirty-six—thirty-four—"

They were losing altitude with sickening speed. Desperately, Marston fired both the keel and bow rockets.

Then as they rushed still lower, they glimpsed the vague outline of great forests beneath them in the shrouding mist.

Eve Graham screamed suddenly, pointed ahead. "Captain—"

Marston and Pollock both saw, before she finished the cry. And the sight made Pollock's skin crawl with horror.

A high dark rock cliff loomed full ahead of the downrushing *Ceres*. Marston frantically fired the bow rockets again, his foot jamming the cyc-pedal to the floor. The spaceship seemed to stand wildly on its tail for a moment. Then it crashed down into the forest.

CHAPTER IV

EVEN as the spaceship crashed down through the mist-shrouded forest, Marston had fired a last thunderous burst of the keel rockets.

The *Ceres* seemed to hesitate in mid-air. Then it hit the ground with a jarring thump that made their recoil-chairs scream in protest.

Silence followed as the burly captain cut the cycs. He mopped sweat from his brow. "By Heaven, I wouldn't want to make another landing like that!"

Pollock, momentarily dazed by the shock, turned toward the girl in the chair beside him. "You're all right, Miss Graham?"

"Yes, I'm not hurt," she said shakily. Then, pointing through the broad window, she cried, "But look out there!"

Greenish mist curled against the window like phantom fingers. Through that drifting fog, the light of the distant sun penetrated only as a sad twilight.

They could only vaguely discern the outlines of the weird planetary forest in which they had landed.

Uncertainly it look, veiled by the mist! Tall, leafless green growths like enormous lichens towered up all around them. There were big club-mosses of a pallid hue, and a thick, pale turf.

Glittering little flame-birds darted across their field of view. It was a species found on most of the outer planets. But they all exclaimed in amazement as two flame-birds of a hundred times the usual size flapped by through the upper mists. Two birds huge as the rocs of fable!

"What the devil!" swore Marston, his massive face stupefied. "It must be a trick of refraction. Nobody ever saw flame-birds *that* big!"

"Nobody's ever seen Neptune before, and gone back to tell about it," Pollock reminded somberly.

The captain unstrapped and stood up. "I'll see to the others. You run an air-test, Pollock."

It did not take long for Pollock to operate the ingenious air-tester which within a few minutes had sucked in a sample of the atmosphere outside, analyzed it, and flashed its findings on the dials.

He jotted down the readings and then with Eve Graham left the bridge-room. They found Marston and Lewis had gathered together the rest of the crew in the top-deck.

Lor Ow and Thubar and the other quodam mutineers were staring in mingled doubt and apprehension through the deckwall at the weird landscape outside.

"By the grace of God, we've got here without being splashed all over the landscape," said Marston bluntly. "But it's going to be an even harder job to get away from here and return safely to Earth.

"It will take the power of all six cyes to pull away from Neptune's gravity. That means we have to rebuild the other four. And *that* means that we're all going to work, for many of the damaged parts will have to be re-made by us with what tools we have."

Lor Ow spoke up quickly. "We'll obey whatever orders you give, captain. We'd a lot rather face a space-court trial than be marooned on this crazy-looking planet."

Pollock looked narrowly at the flat-faced Venusian. He still suspected a hidden purpose behind Lor Ow's quiet surrender.

He told himself his soma-jittery nerves were making him jumpy. There was nothing to fear, when only he and the officers had atom-guns.

"Captain Marston, what about my search for Alan?" Eve Graham asked eagerly. "Can we start looking for him at once? We can't be so terribly far from the plotted location of the radium-beds."

Marston shook his head. "We can't look for your brother yet, Miss Graham. Not until we get the *Ceres* in shape. We know this is a dangerous world, and our first necessity is a possible means of escape."

"But Alan may be dying somewhere, hoping for help!" she pleaded.

The captain was adamant. "I'm sorry, but it's just commonsense to repair our ship first, and then start searching for your brother."

EVE GRAHAM'S pale face showed the depth of her disappointment and distress. And Pollock felt an equal though different disappointment.

He had been desperately hoping that they would at once start searching for the missing explorer's ship. In the medicine-chest of that ship, if they

found it, it would be the only possible source of the soma that his quivering nerves demanded.

"What about the air test?" Marston was asking him.

"It shows okay in oxygen and nitrogen content," Pollock answered. "There's a certain amount of inert gases, but it's quite breathable."

The captain nodded. "Then we won't need space-suits. That'll help. Come on and we'll take a look outside."

The space-door was opened and the gangway lowered. Marston strode down it, with Pollock, Lewis and the girl following him.

They felt no increase of gravitation. Every interplanetary traveller these days wore at his belt the flat, compact gravitation-equalizer which made his weight the same in space or on any planet.

The air was chill, not as cold as they had expected. It was foggy and damp. And it conducted sounds very clearly, for they heard a variety of strange rustling and bird and animal cries out of the mist.

"I want a look at that cliff we nearly ran into it," said Marston, frowning. "I thought I glimpsed something queer about it."

They started forward through the solemn, mist-shrouded lichen forest. The *Ceres* was soon swallowed by the greenish fog behind them.

Gigantic dragon-flies of a size incredible hummed loudly above the lichens. Yet there were ordinary small insects, too. And they glimpsed an ordinary two-foot swamp-lizard.

"The fauna here seems much like that of Jupiter and Saturn, yet some species seem to have attained enormous size," commented Marston.

Pollock was too numbed by fatigue and the persistent dull ache of his nerves to feel great interest. But he

was abruptly aroused.

Marston had stopped suddenly. "Listen! Do you hear that?"

The ground beneath their feet was vibrating to the tread of something that was approaching them from the mists ahead.

"Only a beast of enormous size could shake the ground like that!" exclaimed the captain. "We'd better fall back."

"Too late—look at that!" yelled young Lewis wildly.

Out of the mists in front of them had towered an enormous shape, a thing out of nightmare.

It was an ordinary swamp-lizard in shape, a scaled, quadrupedal, dragon-like reptile with a small head on a long, snaky neck.

But this swamp-lizard was scores of times bigger than the normal species. It was huge as the *hrontosauri* of ancient Earth!

"Don't shoot!" Pollock yelled as Lewis wildly raised his atom-pistol. "You can't kill it and you'll only infuriate it!"

The gigantic lizard showed no sign of attacking them. It simply stared down at them from the curling mists, and then calmly went on cropping tender young shoots from the towering lichens.

"I'm blasted if the thing isn't *tame*!" exclaimed Marston, stupefied.

"There's more of them coming!" exclaimed Eve Graham.

Through the mist appeared a half-dozen more of the giant lizards. But these were an even more astounding sight.

For they wore bridle and saddle and bore riders. *Human* riders, men who had greenish skins and wore leather harness instead of clothing, and who carried long black tubes that looked like queer blow-guns.

"Don't move and don't shoot!" said Marston quickly as they all recoiled. "They may not be hostile."

"Human natives on Neptune!" exclaimed Lewis hoarsely. "And they've tamed those giant lizards for mounts. It's incredible!"

TWO of the Neptunians were dismounting from their giant steeds, and cautiously approaching the Earthmen while the others watched closely.

"They look like Jovians, in a way," muttered Pollock. "The same green skins and dark hair. And yet—"

So strong seemed the resemblance that as the two Neptunians came nearer, Pollock spoke to them in the native tongue of Jupiter.

"We are friends, just landed upon your world!" he said.

The Neptunians understood. For the older of the two, an erect, aging man with authority in his bearing, answered instantly.

He spoke a tongue that was dissimilar in many respects from the Jovian language, yet which was mostly understandable.

"We saw your star-ship fall!" the Neptunian leader said. "And now you speak our language. Tell me, do you come from the world of the ten moons?"

"The world of the ten moons?" repeated Marston, puzzled.

"He means Jupiter!" said Pollock. "He told the Neptunian, 'We come from an even more distant planet. But what do you know of the ten-mooned world?'"

The old Neptunian explained. "Our ancestors came from there long ago, in star-ships like yours. But in time we lost the secret of such star-ships, as we lost many other powers our forefathers possessed."

Pollock felt wonder, even through his daze of exhaustion and nervous strain.

They had uncovered a lost chapter of planetary history.

"These people are descendants of colonists from ancient Jupiter! We know the Jovians of the remote past had a great civilization, and explored and colonized Saturn and Uranus. Well, they came here also."

"That accounts for the similarity in the fauna here!" Marston exclaimed. "Except for the giant size of some of the species. I still can't understand that."

The captain came to the matter uppermost in his mind. He told the old Neptunian, "We need certain metals with which to repair our ship. Have you any such?"

"We have certain metals that we use for weapons and implements," admitted the Neptunian. "If you will come with us—the town of my tribe is not far away."

They started through the mists, walking beside the gigantic lizards whose tread shook the ground. Very soon, they emerged from the lichen forest into a belt of clear plain beyond which towered the dark, high cliff into which the *Ceres* had almost crashed.

A number of the giant lizards were browsing along the edge of the forest here. Racks of bridles and saddles stood nearby. The mounts of their escort were unsaddled and turned loose to join the others.

"Don't you keep them in a corral or anything?" Pollock asked the old chieftain wonderingly.

"There is no need, for the lizards would not run away," was the answer. "And if they were penned up, they could not escape when those of the Monster World came."

The reference puzzled Pollock, but before he could ask a question, the old Neptunian waved a hand toward the steep cliff.

"This is the town of my tribe."

"Town?" echoed Pollock. "But there's nothing here—"

Marston spoke quickly. "I get it. See those cave-openings in the cliff? That's where these people live, in the cliff. I *thought* I saw such caves just before the *Ceres* crashed."

The whole face of the cliff, at the bottom, was riddled with the mouths of tunnels. The Neptunian led toward one of them.

He uttered a shrill cry. Green-skinned men and women poured out of the tunnels. The men were armed with blow-guns and with rudely forged swords and spears of drab-colored metal.

"Pure tungsten, it looks like!" exclaimed Marston eagerly. "If we can get enough of that, we can mix it with salvage metal from the ship to make enough high-test alloy for all the cyparts we need."

"There is much of the metal near here," the Neptunian chieftain replied to his question. "We can show you where."

Eve Graham was staring wonderingly. "How could these people ever have come from Jupiter? They look barbaric, only half civilized."

"They're the result of ages of retrogression," Pollock said. "Must have been cut off, isolated here when the ancient Jovian civilization perished."

"Ask them if they saw my brother's ship!" she begged anxiously.

MARSTON put the question to the leader of the Neptunians, who had gathered about them and were staring in child-like, friendly wonder.

"No, no other star-ship has ever landed here," was the reply.

"Alan wouldn't have landed here, as we did by accident," Eve said quickly. "He'd land at the plotted location of the

radium beds, as we intended."

Marston drew from his pocket a map on which was marked the exact location of the radioactive deposits which astronomers had noted on Neptune.

"The radium beds are northeast of here," he decided. He pointed in that direction, asking the Neptunians, "Are you sure no star-ship landed, a day's march from here in that direction?"

The result of his question was astonishing. A babel of exclamations burst from the Neptunians. Something like fear appeared on their faces.

"No, we know nothing of anything there!" exclaimed the old chieftain. "For there lies the Monster World!"

Pollock remembered the previous reference. Puzzled, he asked, "What is the Monster World?"

The old tribesman answered volubly. "It is a great, deep valley which is an accursed and fearful place. The air in it *glows*. And any living thing which breathes that glowing air is horribly changed by it, becomes swiftly scores of times larger than normal."

He pointed to the giant lizards grazing nearby. "They are lizards which ventured into the Monster World and came out gigantic in size. In the same way, any animal or bird or insect that enters it and breathes its accursed air will quickly grow to colossal size.

"Men grow gigantic there, too! Some of our own race long ago entered it and became giants in stature. They are our most-feared enemies now, those giants of the Monster World. It is because of them that we live in the cliff, for they are too huge to enter our tunnels when they invade our region here."

Pollock was stunned. He looked incredulously at Marston. "Can it be true? We've seen the giant lizards and birds and insects—but giant *wen*?"

Marston's massive face was startled

in expression. "It *could* be true," he muttered. "The 'glowing air'—that's radioactive fog from the radium beds. And breathing that radioactive air could have terrific effects on glandular and cellular growth."

"But Alan?" cried Eve Graham, white to the lips. "He was going to land there, right where the spectroscopic maps showed the radium!"

The old Neptunian, when he understood here, shook his head. "If any star-ship landed there, its occupants would not live long. The giants of the Monster World would slay them quickly."

"Then—then my brother may have been dead for months?" whispered Eve, agonized.

Pollock felt almost as appalled as the girl, for another reason. All that had kept his tortured body going was the hope of getting soma from Alan Graham's ship. And that ship lay somewhere in the dreaded Monster World!

CHAPTER V

NIGHT lay over the *Ceres*, whose occupants slept exhaustedly after a fourth day of urgent work at rebuilding the cyclotrons. The labor of securing metal and casting new parts had required the toil of all.

Pollock alone remained wakeful, jerkily striding back and forth in the top deck. He had offered to stand watch because he had known that even in his present fatigue, he could not sleep.

"I've got to do something—now, tonight!" he said thickly to himself.

Pollock's torment had reached its climax. His face was gaunt and wild, his eyes tortured. Every nerve in him shuddered uncontrollably.

"There's just one chance for soma. And I've got to take it before I go

mad!"

He peered out through the deck-wall. A ghostly, feeble light was stealing through the misty lichen forest. It came, he knew, from the rise of Neptune's big moon. And it finally decided Pollock.

His body cried out for soma. And the only possible place where it might be found was in Alan Graham's ship, somewhere in the dreaded valley of the Monster World. Marston would not let him go, if he knew. He must start now, slip away before the captain awoke.

But he didn't know the exact bearings and distance of the radium valley. The captain knew, of course. But one other person also knew—Eve Graham. She had a copy of the astronomical chart on which the location of the source of radium emanations had been plotted.

Pollock had to have those bearings if there was to be a chance of success for his desperate plan. He must get them from the girl—now!

He went back into the stern of the *Ceres* and softly tapped at her door. "Miss Graham," he whispered.

He heard a light turned on inside and then the door opened. Eve Graham, slim in silk sleeping-slacks, looked out at him startled.

He knew that his haggard, unshaven features and trembling figure were not likely to inspire confidence in any girl. Yet when he put a warning finger to his lips, she admitted him unquestioningly to her cabin.

"I know how anxious you are to find out your brother's fate, Miss Graham," he began hoarsely.

She made an impatient gesture at his form of address. "My friends call me Eve."

For a moment, flooding emotion held Pollock silent. It had been so long

since any girl had spoken in straight, comradely friendship to the haggard soma-drinker which he had become.

"I'm going to be honest with you," he said thickly. "I'm nearly crazy for soma, and I've got to have some. The only possible chance is to get to that radium valley and find your brother's ship. But Marston wouldn't let me go yet, and I don't have the location of the valley.

"I want you to give me your copy of that map. Frankly, I'm going tonight because I have to have soma or go mad. But if I do find your brother's ship, I can bring back some clue to his fate. Will you help?"

Eve Graham looked startled and doubtful. "How could you enter the valley if the radium fog in it is so deadly in effect?"

"I'll wear a space-suit helmet, so as not to breathe that air," he answered quickly. "And I can take one of the Neptunians' tame lizards to get to the valley. There's a chance I can make it. What about it?"

The girl's brown eyes met his. "I'll do more than just give you the map. I'm going with you."

Pollock was appaled. "No, you can't! It's too dangerous."

"I've got to know without further waiting whether Alan is alive or dead!" she exclaimed. "Now that the ship is almost repaired, I'm afraid more trouble with the crew may force us to leave Neptune without being able to search for Alan."

Pollock expostulated, but the girl was firm. "If you try to go without me, I'll awake the whole ship!"

He had to give in. Even at the risk of taking Eve Graham into deadly danger, he couldn't give up his one wild hope for soma.

"Get two space-helmets, and wait for me outside the ship," she whispered.

"I'll bring the map."

POLLOCK stole forward through the sleeping craft, and from the bridge-room took a small gyroscopic compass. He secured two of the transparent space-helmets, each with its small attached tank of compressed oxygen, and then slipped out into the chill, foggy night and waited.

He had his atom-pistol at his belt, but he knew how little the weapon might avail against the dangers of Monster World. He was mad to let Eve go with him! But he *must* find soma now, at once.

Eve appeared beside him in a few minutes. She had dressed in jacket and slacks.

"Are you sure we can get two of the lizards to ride?" she whispered anxiously.

Pollock nodded. "The Neptunians always leave them uncorralled. And the big beasts are perfectly tame."

During these past four days of grinding toil, they had had opportunity to learn much more about the Neptunians and their huge beasts of burden. The green-skinned natives had thronged round the *Ceres* by day.

But no Neptunians were ever abroad at night. So that Pollock and the girl met no one as they went through the wan, misty moonlight of the lichen forest toward the cliff-home of the tribe.

The gigantic lizards were grazing quietly along the forest, as usual. Despite his confidence in their tameness, Pollock felt trepidation as he took two bridles and saddles from the rack nearby and approached the huge reptiles.

His confidence was justified. The lizard he went up to stood quietly as he scrambled up its rough, scaly back and affixed the bridle and saddle as he had seen the Neptunians do. He helped Eve into the saddle, and soon had

saddled another of the lizards.

Perched on the back of the great creature, many yards above the ground, he called softly to the girl.

"Simply slack your reins, and it will start. But first, what's the direction?"

She had, apparently studied the map. For she gave him the bearing without hesitation.

He studied the luminous dial of his gyro-compass, then turned his huge mount northeastward and let his reins slacken.

The lizard started forward through the lichens in rapid, ambling strides. Pollock, his knees gripping the saddle, felt as though he rode the crest of a big wave, so smooth was the motion.

Eve was riding close beside him, her face pale in the misty moonlight. But soon she had plucked up more confidence in her steed.

"At this speed we ought to reach the place before morning!" she called, her voice excited and hopeful.

Pollock almost forgot the torturing thirst for soma that was driving him, in the thrill of their strange night ride.

The two giant lizards seemed perfectly at home in the moonlit mists of the lichen forests, seemed able to perceive and avoid all obstacles. Their pace increased, their great webbed feet shook the ground as they rushed faster through the chill fog of Neptune's night.

Towering lichens and grotesque fungi flashed by in the mist. Mossy turf vibrated soundlessly beneath their passage. Birds and animals, some of them of freakishly huge dimensions, crashed away in startled flight before them.

IT WAS like one of the soma dreams, Pollock thought a little wildly. Yet not even the weird unreality of it could dim the sense of danger that rose in him when he remembered the denizens of this world who were most to be

feared, the giant men who had grown from Neptunians who dared enter Monster World.

He had hung his space-helmet on his back, giving Eve hers to carry in the same way, and it bumped his shoulder-blades with each colossal, running stride of his great mount. At regular intervals, he called to the girl, and checked their course by the gyro-compass.

"It can't be far away," her anxious voice trailed back to him on the wind of their passage. "We've been riding for hours."

For hours? Pollock's dazed mind was so little able to apprehend the passage of time that it seemed hardly more than minutes.

He shook himself, trying to steady his twitching nerves. The greatest danger lay ahead. And if he failed, if he couldn't find soma—

He wouldn't let himself think of that dire possibility. His tortured mind rejected it in an agony of apprehension.

"Look at that glow ahead!" cried Eve to him, pointing.

Pollock saw. Far ahead in the lichen forest there was a pulsing white glow of light that stood out bright by contrast with the wan moonlight of the mists. A white, muffled radiance that was brightest close to the ground.

"It must be the valley," he husked. "You remember the Neptunians spoke of the 'glowing air' in the Monster World."

The lizards, for the first time, were slowing down. The giant steeds seemed reluctant to go further.

Pollock hammered the scaled hack of his mount with the butt of his atom-pistol. Unwillingly, the two lizards went on.

"Better put on your helmet," he called to Eve. "If it's really the valley,

we don't want to breathe any of that air."

He donned his own helmet. They could still converse easily, for a short-range audiophone was built into each helmet.

Twenty minutes later their two giant mounts emerged from the lichen forest and suddenly stopped short. And from Pollock and Eve came exclamations of amazement and horror as they saw what lay ahead.

"Good God, the valley—the Monster World!" he husked.

Their steeds stood upon the brink of an enormous, oval valley whose side sloped down from where they stood. It was of great depth, and was filled with an amonous, glowing haze that partly dispelled the shrouding mists.

The luminosity that impregnated the air down there seemed to emanate from shining cliffs at the farther end of the valley, miles away. Pollock knew what that luminosity was. It was radioactive fog, whose source was the tremendous radium deposits in those shining cliffs.

What they could see of the valley's floor looked mostly marshy and muddy, with beds of giant reeds extending toward swampy pools. The heavy radioactive fog, trapped in the valley, did not reach up to where they sat.

"Look, isn't that a ship just beyond the reeds?" cried Eve Graham excitedly.

She was pointing, and in a moment Pollock too saw. It was a big, long object, half-buried in reeds and mud.

"It *might* be a ship," he said hoarsely. His nerves flamed. If it was, if there was soma in it— "Eve, you wait here while I see."

"No, I'm going with you," she flashed. "You agreed!"

POLLOCK slackened rein, urged the lizard he bestrode forward. But the

giant reptiles did not want to go down into the valley.

It was not, he knew, that they were afraid of the glowing fog. They had themselves grown to their giant dimensions by breathing that fog. It was some thing or things down in that glowing haze that they feared.

He finally got them started down the slope. Pollock's skin crawled as the clammy, radiant fog touched his skin. Only the helmet kept him from breathing that deadly radioactive atmosphere and suffering its terrible effects.

The reeds towered up in front of them when they reached the valley floor. They urged the lizards through the stalks in the direction of the object they had sighted.

Sharp spears of the reeds ripped up at them as the lizards shamhled rapidly through, tearing their slacks to tatters. He urged their mounts faster. His brain was afire with trembling, thirsty hope.

The reeds thinned out a little. They glimpsed closer ahead the object they sought, a long, torpedo-like hulk half-buried in mud. It was a space-ship, a small eight-man cruiser. And—

"It's Alan's ship!" Eve's voice rang frantic with sudden hope. "It's the *Meteor*!"

She urged her lizard wildly forward. Then, as they galloped toward the half-buried craft, Pollock's eyes lifted to beyond it.

His hair bristled on his neck with horror at the incredible apparition that he beheld.

Two gigantic figures were looming up through the shining haze beyond the reeds and the ship. Two gigantic men!

They were wading waist-deep through the pools beyond the reeds, yet even so, their colossal figures towered up sixty feet in the haze. Their skin had a curious luminous quality, but

their features were those of Neptunians.

The two colossal wore harnesses of leather that looked like tanned lizard-skin, and wore flashing wristlets set with big chunks of shining radium ore. They were coming straight toward Pollock and Eve, with giant arms menacingly reaching out for them.

CHAPTER VI

WITH hissing screeches of wild panic, the two great lizards they rode reared wildly up at sight of the oncoming giant men. Pollock and Eve were flung violently from the saddles.

Pollock hit the reeds, and rolled over and over among them. As he did so, he heard a cry of agony from the girl. He glimpsed her lying amid the reeds nearby.

Stunned, he managed to scramble toward her. As he did so, the soft ground vibrated beneath him and he glimpsed the two incredible giants pursuing the fleeing lizards, with up-raised spears.

One colossal stride carried the hundred-foot men past the reeds in which Pollock and Eve had been flung. They leaped easily over the half-buried space-ship!

Pollock found the girl lying, her face white with agony inside her helmet. "Eve, we've got to get out of here!" he said frantically. "They'll come back in a moment and hunt for us."

She tried to rise. But as she put her hand to the ground, she sank back with a little moan of pain. "My arm!"

Pollock was horrified to find that her shoulder had been dislocated by her violent fall. She was faint with the agony of it.

He looked wildly around. He had to find a better hiding place than this. Then his eye fell upon the nearby ship.

The two colossi could not get into that!

He bent and picked up the fainting girl, and stumbled through the reeds toward the ship. Half-sunken in the soft ground as it was, its door was still above ground and was open. He staggered in with Eve and put her down on the floor of the mid-deck corridor.

He looked around. Green mold covered everything in the vessel. There was no sign that it had been occupied for a long time.

Though her face was pallid with pain, Eve also was trying to look around. "Alan?" she whispered.

"No sign of him here," said Pollock thickly. "Eve, they're coming back!"

The ship was quivering slightly to the returning vibration of huge footsteps. Through a porthole, Pollock glimpsed the titan figures of the two giant Neptunians approaching outside.

The two colossi were searching the reeds. He hoped they would not think of the ship. But it soon became evident that he had left tracks in the soft ground. For the two came toward the ship.

"They can't get in here," he told Eve, desperately. "They're far too huge to enter."

The giants hestode the space-ship as though it were a toy craft! They stooped over it.

A hand, gigantic beyond all belief, reached in through the space-door. It groped back and forth along the mid-deck.

With a strangled cry, Pollock snatched up the girl and retreated to the end of the deck. His movement had apparently been heard. For now the hand snatched viciously toward him.

He drew his atom-pistol, levelled it and pulled trigger. There was no answering blast from the weapon. It was dead, useless.

Stunned by that disastrous discov-

ery, Pollock crouched with Eve back in the farthest corner. The groping hand could not quite reach him. The giant could not get his upper arm through the door.

Presently the hand was withdrawn. He heard the booming of great voices, high overhead, like rolling thunder. Then the space-ship began to rock violently as the colossi tried to tear it out of the ground.

Pollock sweated with nightmare fear. If they got the ship unearthed, they could between them crack it open—

But apparently even the strength of the two colossi was not quite sufficient to tear the ship loose from its deep bed in the ground. They desisted the attempt. The thunderous voices rolled briefly. Then one of the giants strode rapidly away across the marsh.

The other remained, squatting purposefully outside the ship. The meaning of it was plain enough to Pollock.

"One of them has gone to get others," he said hoarsely. "Eve, this is a trap I've got you into."

"It's not your fault," she husked. "I insisted on coming along."

HER fine face was drawn with pain.

He knew the hellish agony she must be suffering from the dislocated shoulder. And he could not, he found after examination, do anything with her shoulder without help.

Pollock felt all the sensations of a rat in a trap, awaiting death. If he only had something to fight with! Why had his atom-pistol proved useless?

Its tiny gauge showed that it contained a full charge of the "unstable" copper that was its fuel. Again he triggered, but it remained dead. He opened the hutt. The fuel-chamber was empty.

"Good God, Lor Ow tricked us!" he exclaimed. "When he gave us back

the atom-guns, he gave them to us empty except for just enough charge to fire one blast. He knew Marston would test the guns—once."

The diabolical cunning of the Venusian mutineer stunned him. He knew now why Lor Ow had agreed so readily to surrender.

"He and Thubar and the other mutineers, as soon as the cycs are completely repaired, will overpower the officers and seize the ship again! And the cycs are nearly finished *now*! We've got to get back and warn Marston—"

The hopelessness of their prospects of ever doing so struck him to silence. The giant Neptunian still crouched outside, ominously waiting. There was no possible escape from the ship.

Eve's face was pure white with agony, fine perspiration beading her forehead. Yet she tried to smile at him.

"Don't worry about me," she whispered. "If you can get away to warn the captain, do so."

"Do you think I'd leave you, after being crazy enough to let you come?" he flamed. "It's my fault—"

Her low exclamation of pain interrupted him. Her effort to turn and speak to him had wrung new torture from her twisted shoulder.

"Eve, listen!" he encouraged. "I haven't yet looked through this ship for soma. If I can find any, it will deaden your pain enough that you can move. We can try cutting out a port on the side of the ship away from that monster."

Pollock stumbled through the shadowy ship, toward the cabins in the stern. The medicine chest should be in one of them. And if there was soma in it—

Soma! Even in their present moment of dire peril, his brain and body cried out for it. It would steady his long-thirsty nerves, would bring him new strength and ease Eve's agony so

that they could at least make an attempt to escape their terrible predicament.

Pollock's hands shook wildly when he found the medicine chest. He tore open the door. His gaze flew instantly to one small, sealed plastic flask of red liquor.

He snatched and gripped it as a drowning man might grip a straw, and looked for more. There was no more. He tore the contents of the chest wildly out, but without avail. This one little flask held all the soma in the ship.

"But it's not enough!" he told himself wildly. "It's barely enough for one person. If I give it to Eve—"

If he gave it to Eve, it would relieve the agony she was suffering. But it would leave not a drop of soma for himself.

And he had sweated, toiled and fought for days to get this precious little flask of the red liquor! He had dreamed of it, his body and nerves had cried out for it night and day. Give it up, now?

"I won't do it," he thought desperately. "I *can't* do it! I've got to have this for myself."

They were both almost certain to be killed soon, anyway, he told himself. Why should he give the soma to Eve, merely to save her a short period of agony before the almost inevitable end?

With death staring them in the face, he might as well die happy! Pollock unscrewed the tiny flask and prepared to lift his helmet briefly so that he might raise the flask to his lips.

CHAPTER VII

HIS arm froze, without completing the movement. For he had again seen in front of him the pale, brave face of Eve Graham.

He couldn't drink the soma. He

knew that, now. Not even the terrible mastery of the soma-drinking habit could force him to do so, when the liquid meant surcease of agony for the girl.

He stumbled back through the ship to his side. He was shaking from mental strain as he gently raised her in his arms.

"Eve, I found a little soma. It will anaesthetize your pain. But drink it only a few drops at a time, or it will put you to sleep."

He showed her how to lift her helmet and hold her breath momentarily while she drank. And as she did so, he held the flask to her lips, feeling a strange new calm.

Color came back into her face. She looked up at him gratefully, as she lowered her helmet back into position.

"That's killed the pain. I can move now—"

She stopped, looking at Pollock's haggard, strangely calm face. Her eyes became stricken.

"You gave me all the soma you found! You've nearly died for it, yet you gave it to me—"

"It doesn't matter, Eve," he said dully. "I don't need it that badly."

And as he said that, Pollock suddenly realized that what he said was *true*. He didn't feel now as though he needed the soma.

The wild craving of his nerves and brain for the Martian liquor had miraculously quieted from the moment he had made his decision.

"Eve," he said hoarsely. "I didn't believe what I said just now. But it's so! I don't feel now that I'll ever need soma again."

The explanation burst upon his thunderstruck brain. The only possible key to the miracle.

"I broke my *physical* body of the soma-habit, in all these weeks I've had

to do without it! I sweated it out, as a few people have done before. But I didn't know I had. I still thirsted for the stuff as a *mental* habit—and my effort of will just now broke that!"

"I'm glad!" she cried, her eyes brimming. "No matter what happens, I'm glad!"

Pollock felt a soaring exultation, even in the midst of deathly danger. The grip that had strangled his life for two years was gone. He felt like a prisoner released. He might die, but he'd die clean!

But new, buoyant courage and hope tingled through him now. He wouldn't die if he could help it! They still had a slim chance—

"Eve, we've got to get out of this ship before the other giants come and rip this craft apart."

He looked from the porthole. The colossus still crouched outside, ominously waiting.

Pollock raced down to the moldering cyc-room of the vessel and came back with rusting tools. He sprang to a porthole on the side of the ship opposite the guarding giant.

"If we can cut a way out on this side, we'll have a chance to get away through the reeds. You take a few drops of the soma whenever the pain comes back."

HE TOILED at the thick double glassite of the porthole, the rusted points and edges of his tools only slowly eating into the tough material. Eve kept watch upon the crouching colossus on the other side. Pollock finally got the porthole cut through. He lifted out the sections of glassite and placed them softly on the floor.

"I'll go first, Eve, and lift you out," he whispered.

He slipped through the porthole. Half buried as the ship was, it was only

a few feet to the soft ground.

A thunderous rolling of sound broke in the distance. Pollock turned, appaled. A group of five colossi were rapidly approaching through the marsh, and had glimpsed him dropping out of the ship.

"Eve, quickly! They're coming!" he yelled.

The girl lowered herself clumsily by one arm through the porthole. He snatched her to her feet.

The thunderous voices were shouting back and forth. The five oncoming colossi and the one on the other side of the ship were coming toward them.

"Into the reeds!" he cried frantically. "Eve, it's our only chance!"

The girl had inexplicably stopped. As though frozen by horror, she was staring wildly up at the oncoming six giants.

She was in full view of them. They had seen and were coming. Pollock knew he could not desert her, even though her frozen fascination of horror had cost them their last chance.

Mad with rage and the bitterness of defeat, he stepped in front of her and shook his fist at the oncoming monstrous shapes, like a Gulliver defying Brobdingnagians.

"Come on, then, damn you!" he shouted.

Eve ran past him, toward the striding colossi, her hands uplifted wildly to them.

"Alan!" she screamed.

And then, Pollock froze as he saw. Saw that the leader of these colossi was no giant Neptunian like the others.

He was a giant yes,—towering huge as the others, dressed like them in leather harness. But his features were those of a young Earthman, features strangely like those of Eve herself.

"Alan, it's you!" Eve was sobbing wildly.

Pollock reached her side, supported her as her knees buckled. The leader of the giants, towering titantic over them, was kneeling.

"It's my brother!" she sobbed. "It's Alan!"

Alan Graham, the man who had flown this doomed ship to Neptune and whom she had come to seek—a *giant?*"

Pollock knew horror transcending anything he had yet experienced. Yet he should have been prepared for this, he thought. The radioactive fog of this hellish valley worked its terrible effect upon any living thing that breathed it—whether animal, Neptunian or Earthman.

"Eve! My God, how did you get here!" The words rolled down like shattering thunder from the giant kneeling over them.

Alarm flashed into his face. "You've got to get out of the valley, quickly! If your helmet leaks and you breathe this air, you're lost."

He extended his giant open hand toward them, palm upward. "Get into my hand, both of you."

Pollock, supporting the girl, stumbled up onto the colossal palm. He felt more strongly than ever that this must be sheer nightmare.

Alan Graham's hand cupped protectingly around them, then rushed dizzily up through the air as the giant Earthman rose to his feet.

He strode purposefully up the slope of the valley, the other giants following unquestioningly. Only when they had climbed up out of the poisonous radium fog of the valley into the clean mists of the lichen forest, did he put them down.

EVE and Pollock could take off their helmets here. And as they did so, Alan Graham again kneeled and his colossal face came down toward them.

He was crying, great tears running down those giant cheeks. There was something terrible to Pollock in the spectacle of those tears.

"Eve!" his thunderous voice husked. "My kid sister Eve, come all the way to Neptune to look for me. And you find me, like this."

"Oh, Alan, how did it happen?" she sobbed.

He told them. "Our ship landed in the valley, the plotted location of the radium deposits we were seeking. But we crashed in landing in that glowing fog. The ship was damaged, some of us killed.

"We guessed from what we saw that to breathe that radioactive air would have terrible results. So we worked to repair the ship and wore helmets when we went out. But the radioactive poison got us. We hadn't suspected that the hull of the *Meteor* had been cracked underneath and was allowing the poisonous air to enter the ship.

"We didn't suspect, until we began to change. We began to *grow*. Day by day, week by week, our stature expanded. We had to get out of the ship before we became too big for it. And we knew then that we were doomed, anyway."

He made a bopeless gesture. "We've been here ever since. And in these months, after we grew to this giant size, I have been trying to help the other poor devils of giants whom we found here when we came, the Neptunians who were caught in this poisonous trap. I've been teaching them things, persuading them to stop raiding the little people of the cliffs, doing what I can to make their life more tolerable."

Pollock looked in awe at the other giants. They were all Neptunians, those other five. They were watching Alan Graham in reverence.

"You're going back to Earth with me!" Eve exclaimed desperately. "We'll

find some way of bringing you back to normal size—"

Alan Graham shook his huge head sadly. "Nothing will ever do that, Eve. I know enough science to realize that this hyper-growth is a one-way process. And that means that I must stay on Neptune for life, for no ship is big enough to take me away."

He went on rapidly. "But you must get away from this hell's planet, at once. Where is your ship?"

Pollock answered. "It's near the cliff of the little tribes. But I'm afraid it may go without us!"

He explained swiftly about the mutineers and the trick of Lor Ow with the atom-pistols.

"The cycs are repaired now, the ship able to take off," Pollock finished hoarsely. "I fear that Lor Ow and his band will seize control and leave when they find us two missing, for they'll know that I would discover their trick with the guns if I ran into danger."

Alan Graham's thunderous voice rang with decision. "Then we've got to get you to your craft without delay! I can deal with your mutineers!"

He extended his hand. "This is the quickest way! You could never keep up with us."

He cupped his hands protectingly around them again as they stepped back onto it. Straightening up, holding his band carefully in front of him, Alan Graham uttered a thunderous word to the other giants.

They started through the lichen-forests, towering above the tallest of the growths, crushing down the smaller ones beneath their giant strides. Daylight had come, and in the misty light the spectacle of the six hurrying colossi was one that stunned Pollock's brain.

Crouching in that huge, swaying palm, his arms around Eve's shoulders, he looked forth incredulously at

the speed with which the foggy forest fell behind them. Until he died, Pollock would not forget that hastening of the giants through the strengthening dawn.

He thought, finally, that they must be near the *Ceres*. And then between the giant strides, he heard a distant sound in the fog.

"That's rockets blasting!" he yelled wildly to the colossal Earthman who carried them. "The *Ceres* must be taking off now!"

ALAN GRAHAM rushed forward, heedless of all obstacles, his legs crashing through the great lichen trees as a man might through reeds.

The roar of rockets blasted louder to their ears. They came into sight of the space-ship. And Pollock yelled again, for the *Ceres* was taking off with keel and stern rockets flaming, rushing up toward them in a long slanting climb.

"The mutineers have the ship and they've got away!" he groaned.

"I can still stop them!" shouted Alan Graham.

His hand swooped dizzily to put Pollock and Eve down behind a big lichen on the ground. And then, straightening, Graham charged forward.

He charged straight toward the climbing space-ship! It was rushing up toward him like a thunderbolt of metal. The colossal Earthman leaped up directly in front of it.

The prow of the *Ceres* tore deep into his throat. Eve screamed as her colossal brother staggered beneath that mortal wound.

But he was gripping and holding the bow of the ship with terrible, dying strength! And the other giants, roaring with deafening, raging voices, were springing forward to help him.

Their enormous arms circled the

ship, and pulled it down to the ground by brute strength! And as the prow was torn out of his throat, Alan Graham swayed, staggered and then fell like a crashing oak.

Eve shook free of Pollock's grip and ran toward the giant's prostrate form. Pollock, starting to follow, saw the door of the *Ceres* open and glimpsed Lor Ow leap forth.

The Venusian ringleader, his face wild and dazed, saw Pollock and raised his atom-pistol. Before he could fire, the giant foot of one of the colossal Neptunians came down upon him.

Thubar and the others, who had started to follow Lor Ow out, ran back into the ship screaming. But Pollock hastened after Eve.

He found her beside the head of her giant, fallen brother. Alan Graham's great eyes rolled toward them, in a dying flicker of strength.

"Better this way, Evie," he husked. "Don't be too sorry for me—"

And he was dead with the words, and Eve was sobbing wildly against Pollock's chest. He tried to soothe her.

"He was right, Eve. He'd always have been a prisoner here on Neptune."

HE WENT back with her toward the ship. Marston and Lewis were emerging from it now, their faces wild with incredulity also as they looked up at the Neptunian colossi.

"Pollock!" cried the captain. "I still can't understand! Lor Ow and his bunch overpowered us this morning, and were taking off. They kept us alive because they still figured to torture one of us into navigating for them. But then these giants appeared—"

Pollock interrupted the dazed captain. "You've got the mutineers under complete control now?"

Marston nodded grimly. "Thubar and the other two ringleaders are locked

safely up this time. They lost their nerve completely and released us just now, and that's the first thing I did. And *this* time I made sure our atom-guns were not empty."

The Neptunian colossi had left the *Ceres* and were approaching their fallen leader. They bent over the prostrate giant.

Pollock saw the sorrow in the faces of those incredible figures. He saw them debate briefly among themselves.

"Pollock, what if they—," Marston began fearfully.

"They won't harm us," Pollock answered quietly. "That's Alan Graham, and he was their beloved leader and they know we were his friends."

The five colossi straightened. Two of them had picked up Alan Graham's stupendous body between them.

Bearing it, never looking back, the five giants strode away through the mists. They disappeared in the fog northeastward.

Eve looked after them with tear-filled eyes. "They're going to bury him," he told her, his throat tight.

She nodded. And her voice was choked as she called into the mist. "Alan! Alan, goodbye!"

Marston's urgent voice recalled them to the immediate present. "For God's sake let's get off this devil's world!"

A little later, with Marston at the controls, the *Ceres* again lifted from the lichen forest and climbed through the

mist on roaring rockets. It swung out through the foggy atmosphere until at last the clear vault of space with the hosts of brilliant stars burst on their vision.

Pollock went tiredly down to help old Stacy check the cys. They would be shorthanded all the way back to Earth, he knew. But they would make it.

He found Marston talking with Eve when he went back to the bridge. The burly captain spoke casually to him.

"Mr. Lewis will take the next watch while you get some sleep. Then you will take over after him, Mr. Pollock."

"Mr. Pollock?" he repeated wonderingly. It had been long since that formal address of officer to officer had met his ears.

Marston nodded calmly. "I'm appointing you temporary officer, since Harker is disabled. And I'm betting that when I tell the Board all I've just heard, you get your certificate back. When you do, I'd like to have you with me permanently."

Pollock swallowed. It was too much to take, almost. His self-respect, his job, his future—all coming back to him together.

"I—I'd be happy to serve with you, sir," he managed.

"Good, that's a promise," rumbled the captain.

And Pollock, looking into Eve's tremulous, happy eyes, saw there another promise.

THE MARQUIS OF ANGLESEY'S LEG

WATERLOO is the site of one of the most famous battles of history. Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington fought it out there, and now the spot has become a "must" for tourists. Among the curiosities of Waterloo are the grave of the Marquis of Anglesey's leg, and the house in which it was cut off. There can be seen the boot that leg once proudly wore.

The owner of that house finds that its queer relics offer a very lucrative source of revenue,

and for generations it has been handed down in will after will as valuable property. The nobleman's famous limb resides in a garden within a coffin under a weeping willow tree. A glorious epitaph has been inscribed upon the stone which marks the place.

Some wag, aware of the ridiculousness of the setting scribbled two lines beneath the inscription.

"Here lies the Marquis of Anglesey's limb,
The devil will have the rest of him."

AMAZING Facts

By
A. MORRIS

SCIENCE has prophesied a new peace-time use for a war-time instrument. It is thought, and logically so, that the echo-sounding devices now used to detect the presence of submarines may be valuable in the post-war world in helping fishermen determine the whereabouts of schools of fish.

The question of why people like to fish has been tackled by many philosophers. Sir Isaac Walton has retained his fame through the years for his essay on fishing. Most men have concluded that 65 per cent of the appeal of this sport lies in the utter uncertainty of the wet weary pastime. If the position of droves of fishes could be noted by instruments all the fun of the sport would disappear. The fisherman's gambling instinct would be thwarted; the charm that lured him into unknown waters would no longer exist.

Will science stop in this race to take all the uncertainty out of the sportsman's games? Will the golf irons of the future be equipped with range finders and the hunter's gun with a television set?

DUE to the war, steel mills cannot produce full-capacity tonnage because they must use low-grade melting steel; and they are being forced to dip deeply into their inventories of scrap, reducing them to an abnormally low point when in normal times they would be building up their stocks for the winter months.

This condition has forced steel mills, municipalities, and various types of traction companies to begin to obtain the thousands of tons of scrap rail by removing abandoned street car tracks which are now embedded, unused in the streets of hundreds of cities throughout the country. Furthermore the removal of these rails is economical and efficient through a method, recently developed in which a portable oxy-acetylene cutting machine is used.

Aside from the simplicity and high speed of cutting which makes this method so efficient, there also are economies which can be realized. The method permits removal of the rail without breaking adjacent pavement, even when asphalt, macadam, stone blocks, or brick have been laid flush with the top of the rail.

Thus repaving costs are kept at a minimum.

The cutting machine is placed on a special track; two or more sections of such a track can be used so that the cutting operation can be carried on continuously. The cutting blow-pipe of the machine is equipped with a bevel-cutting nozzle, and a single cut is made at an angle along the groove of the rail so that the top of the rail is severed from the web in two longitudinal sections. The cut rail can then be easily removed with a pinch bar.

IF TESTS continue to be as successful as those tried on 90 patients in several Philadelphia hospitals the United States will possess a new chemical remedy against germs. According to Dr. Ellice McDonald and Dr. V. W. Murray Wright this new remedy will be especially useful to the army for treating war wounds, since it has been very effective in the treatment of infections caused by germs in the gram-positive group, which are the ones found in from 80 to 90% of wounds.

The new remedy is known as H-1 and is extracted from germs found in the ground. It is a fine gray powder and retains its potency even though highly diluted. Before using the extract it is dissolved in a small quantity of alcohol and then diluted with water. Another advantage of the remedy is the fact that in solutions it is colorless which permits the surgeon to examine the wound without any interference. Moreover, Dr. Wright reports that the remedy stimulates healing in addition to being an effective germicide.

H-1 is the latest addition to the group of remedies used to fight germs that is being made from micro-organisms instead of being prepared by chemists as are the many sulfa drugs. The group of remedies that uses germs to kill germs already contains gramicidin, tyrocidine, and penicillin.

The reason the army is so vitally interested in this new germicide, in addition to its above mentioned advantages is the fact that only the powder need be shipped and thus huge quantities of the powerful germicide could be easily moved to any front by simply sending a small package in a plane.

The Radiant Rock

By Frances M. Deegan

Somehow this hill-billy could make a wash machine run without a power connection. He did it with rocks . . .

IT WAS black as the inside of a fiddle. No moon, no stars. Nothing but this blind trail. And the pain of my head, and an empty belly, and a savage disgust with everything—including myself.

They'd hang me some day. But not

this time. Not if I could get far enough away from that town. I was cleaned. Sure. And I had to hoof it and I didn't know where I was headed for. But there's such a thing as determination. Even when you're licked. And, brother, I was licked—but good.



"We'd better get on home—Maw'll give us the very devil for this!"



Dan Barron, the human football. I'd been bounced around so much it's a wonder they didn't scrap me and call it a day. That's what they should have done. Because the last time I didn't bounce, I exploded.

First it was the Army.

"Lead me to it," I said, "that's just what I've been saving myself for." And I went down and enlisted. Sure. The Army. It's tough and it's hard and it's hup, two, three, four and keep your nose clean. Great stuff. Just what I was cut out for.

There's only one thing wrong with the Army. They got sergeants. They got sergeants all over the place and you can't get along with any of them.

So I get transferred. Twice I get transferred. But all the time I have to keep hitting sergeants. Sure, I got a nasty temper, and I got a build like Jack Dempsey used to have, and the same kind of fists, and I don't mind using 'em. I don't mind at all. But the sergeants do. Shows you what kind of guys sergeants are; they squawk—but loud.

So finally I get bounced. Yeah, unfit for duty. Me. Six foot three and 212 pounds of muscle, rarin' to go. I get a dishonorable discharge. On account of sergeants.

All right, so I'm an insolent, unmanageable mule-head. I admit it. But don't let me hear anybody else say it—especially sergeants.

I get a job in a defense plant. I last about three weeks. I don't like the guy working next to me. He talks too much, he thinks he knows it all, so I have to poke him. So I get bounced.

Three times I get a job in a defense plant and three times I get bounced for poking guys. Disrupting the morale, they call it. The last time it turns into a free-for-all. They have to shut down the department for the rest of the

day.

They shove me in the can. It takes three of the plant guards to get me downtown. The guy behind the desk starts in on me. He's a cop sergeant, but anyway a sergeant, so he can't just book me and go on about his business. Oh, no. He's got to tell me what a no good son-of-a-so-forth I am.

So I dive across the desk and slam him on the floor and bang his head a couple times before they connect with the black jack. I get ninety days and a fifty dollar fine.

When I get out they hand me my \$76.00 change and a warning. It looks like a good time to get drunk. So I get drunk. I wind up in a crap game with four other mugs. I get cleaned in a hurry and I know the dice are crooked.

"Goodbye now," the mugs tell me. The old bounceroo. That's when I explode.

Four guys. I take an awful shellacking. It's dirty, but it's stand up and take it or lay down and get your head kicked off. I don't quit until I get three of the bedbugs laid out on the floor. The fourth guiny comes at me with a shiv. I go in low and butt him with my head and grab him by the legs and toss him through the window.

Maybe I broke his neck. I *don't* know. I didn't wait to find out . . .

I'D BEEN on the road for two days now, ducking and dodging the minute anybody came in sight. I bet I could have scared a whole battalion just by standing up and waving my arms. The way I was banged up. A two day beard, my work clothes hanging in bloody rags, and all of me crusty with dirt.

My left shoulder was numb where the shiv went in. At least a couple of ribs were busted. My face felt like somebody had used a hammer on it.

And my legs were about ready to give out. I knew it when I stumbled over a rock and went to my knees. I sat down on the rock. And then I began to ache all over and shiver. I knew I wasn't going to get up again. I just sat there. I never felt worse in my life.

"Son-of-a-dog," I said. "If it will only start to rain now, everything will be perfect."

Pretty soon it started to rain.

I guess I went to sleep. I don't know. Anyway I kind of forgot things for a while. Then it started to thunder. It sounded like ninety-five 16-inch guns all going off with split second timing.

I thought it was never going to end. I thought it was going to jar the earth loose and split it down the middle. I thought I was going to be deaf the rest of my life. Then I quit worrying about anything because it looked like I was going to be drowned.

The rain came faster and faster until it was like somebody had dumped a whole ocean out. Tons of water came pouring down. I put my head in my arms and let it beat me breathless.

Lightning split the dark with ugly zig-zags and I held my hands around my face and tried to see where I was. All I saw was a lot of hills jumping up and down. Then the thunder cut loose again.

I was gasping like a fish. I waited for the next lightning flash and when it came I saw her standing there. I didn't notice the hair at first. All I saw was that gorgeous body. She had a dress on, but it didn't mean a thing. The rain had pasted it tight around those full young curves. And it was beautiful, brother. It was beautiful.

The lightning kept flaring and flickering with wicked jabs and the thunder growled and I could see her walking toward me. After a while I noticed her hair. Even then, even in the wet, I

could see that it was alive. I don't know how else to say it. It was thick, wavy, tawny hair that reached below her shoulders, and it was just right for the rest of her.

She came and put her hands on me and pulled me to my feet. Her body was lithe and warm against me. The rain melted us together.

"You better come on in the house," she said. And I went.

It wasn't far. She opened the door and it was dark inside and I stumbled. Our wet bodies collided and we stood there clinging to each other. I kissed her. And it was sweet hell. Because every hurt on my body caught fire and blazed. And I was glad of it. Glad my hattered carcass could feel anything like this . . .

An old woman came from somewhere with a kerosene lamp. "That you, Sulina? Who's that with you?"

"I found him. He was settin' out there in the rain so I brung him in."

Thunder shook the house and rain crashed like breakers.

The old woman held the lamp higher and took a good look.

"Great Jehosaphat! What you been doin', fallin' outa trees?"

"Yeah, yeah," I said. "I been falling out of trees all week. I been practicing for parachute jumping—without the parachute."

"My lands! It sure is hard on your clothes."

"He can have Bud's bed. Can't he, Maw?" Her hands made little pressing strokes down my back.

Not so good. Not so good. Not with Maw standing there holding the lamp. I let go of her and tried to back up, but she came with me. I got a handful of soft, round shoulder and pushed.

"Sulie! Git on up to bed now. Shame on you!"

"But he's hurt, Maw. Can't he have

Bud's bed? Please, Maw. Please take good care of him."

"Scat now, 'fore I take the broomstick to you. Go on, git!"

SHE LET go of me and left a chilled place where she had been. She walked across the room and she was barefooted and made straight little tracks all the way until she came to the door. She half turned to look back at me with big gray-blue eyes. Then she smiled and it was like the sun coming out, and now I had seen her from all angles. Front, rear and side. And she was beautiful, no matter where you stood, she was beautiful.

Maw put the lamp down and all the shadows shifted. And I was tired as an old dog just before he was shot. I sat down and let the pain have me. It moved from one place to another, gnawing like a rat and taking its time about it.

I will say the old woman knew her stuff. She made coffee and a couple of hefty bacon and egg sandwiches. Then she got out a big first aid kit and taped my ribs and cauterized my shoulder, and plastered bandages here and there, and it was wonderful.

I told her. I said, "You sure know your stuff, Mrs.—"

"Call me Maw."

"Maw what?"

"Stokes. What's your'n?"

"Barron. Dan Barron. Bull Barron. Black Barron. Take your choice."

"You married?"

"Nope. Never been."

"You'd oughta. How come you to be on this road?"

"I got lost. How come you to be so handy with the Red Cross outfit?"

"That Torg. He's always gettin' himself banged up."

"Who's that?"

"My boy, Torg. Big fellow, like you.

'Cept he's blond and got a bad foot. My other boy's Bud. He's a little runt."

"These boys . . . They're the brothers of—er—your daughter?"

"Well, natchelly! You leave Sulie alone, you hear?"

"Well, natchelly," I said, half asleep.

I SLEPT late. It was marvelous—waking up in a bed. I wondered whose bed it was. Not hers, anyway. It smelled like a man. My rags were gone. There was a clean shirt and wash pants on a chair. They fit, so they must have been Torg's. He was big, all right.

I came down to the kitchen and the place was full of steam and the soapy smell of boiling clothes. Maw peered at me out of a white cloud.

"Wash day," she informed me. Unnecessarily, I thought.

She shoved the wash boiler off to a dangerous angle and made room for the coffee pot. I sat down and breathed hot alkali fumes. The coffee tasted like soap.

Maw stood there with her hands on her hips and looked me over in the daylight.

"I sure want to thank you," I said, "for taking me in last night. I was all in."

"Uh-huh. Reckon you better light here for a few days. Rest up a spell."

That was fine. That was just what I wanted. "That's pretty nice of you," I said. "Anybody you want killed—just let me know." And I went out to look around. I thought I ought to help Sulie with whatever she was doing.

The washing machine was chuckling and swishing away on the side porch. It was one of those old, wooden, hand-operated masterpieces that came out about 1900.

I thought Maw had done pretty good to keep it going all these years, and I started to step off the porch. I had one

foot in the air when the thing socked me—what I had just seen.

I went off the porch in a combination back-flip helly-whopper. The side of my head hit the bottom step, and I just laid there and wondered what I'd busted this time.

I could hear that damn washer gurgling and chuckling up there on the porch. Yeah. No electric current in miles. No gas engines, no batteries in sight. Nothing. Just that damfool old hand washer—washing clothes all by itself.

I started to get up and Sulie came out and she was dry now, but she sure filled out a calico dress so I didn't get up.

She stepped down and lifted my head and put her arms around me and she felt as beautiful as she looked.

"You're always gettin' hurt," she said, and her voice was sweet like a child, but it had grownup seduction in it. That glorious hair came down around my face and I thought the hell with the washing machine.

THEN Maw came out and I remembered where I was, and that Maw's child had no business holding me the way she was. Close and—well, in just that way. So I decided to get up and look at the washing machine.

"How do you stop this thing?" I said.

"Brake," Maw said, and pushed down on a wooden lever.

The machine jerked, growled, stuttered and finally quit. The water and stuff inside was still sloshing. But the wooden handle that moved the paddles—when it was pushed back and forth—was standing straight up. I wanted to turn the thing inside out, but I was afraid to monkey with it.

"And all you got to do to start it, is lift the brake?"

"Uh-huh. It's a 'lectric washer."

"It is like hell!" I said. "Either somebody around here has discovered perpetual motion, or else you've got something pretty fancy in the way of remote control. Who rigged this up for you?"

"Bud, he fixed it. He makes 'lectricity."

I shoved Sulie off my shoulder. "Where is he?"

"Out back. In the shed."

"I'll show you where 'tis," Sulie was on again. I let her stay there and I looked at Maw and she looked at me. I didn't like what I saw, so I shoved Sulie off again.

"You stay here," I said, "and help Maw. I'll get there quicker by myself." She scowled at me like a vicious kitten, and I went around the house and found the shed.

My busted ribs were aching again. My shoulder throbbed. And I took a bell of a bang on the ear when I hit that step. But I forgot all this when I got inside the shed. Because this guy Bud really was making electricity. Sure. There was nothing to it.

Bud was a little, thin guy with suspicious eyes. He sure didn't look like he came from the same place Sulie did. He had a lot of junk piled around. Pieces of old motors and transformers, and all kinds of odds and ends. Even an old bicycle. He squinted up at me and didn't say anything.

"Hiya. I'm Dan Barron."

"Yeah, I know."

"Looks like you got quite a shop here."

"Uh-huh."

"You—er, you making any electricity this morning?"

"Uh-huh."

I wanted to squeeze his ugly head, but I was polite as hell. "You mind if I stick around? I'm kind of interested in electricity myself."

"You done any 'lectrical work?"

"Yeah, yeah," I said. "I worked around. Here and there. How'd you come to get into it?"

"Correspondence course. What I can't figure out is why they got to have so much wirin' in the city. The 'lectricity's just the same, ain't it?"

"Well, yes and no," I said. "Yes and no. In the city it takes a hell of a lot of machinery to corral the juice. Out here it looks a lot simpler. It kind of beats me where you get it."

"I found it," he said. "Up in the hills yonder."

"Oh, you found it."

"Uh-huh. I bust it off in pieces and bring it back here and saw it up to fit the connections. Only thing is—I ain't been able to make it work on light globes."

"You—er, you got a hunk of it laying around?"

He put down the coil he was tinkering with, got out a pair of heavy gloves and a hack saw, and started sawing on a big piece of rough looking rock. And I began to get crazy ideas. Yeah. You remember those old crystal radio sets? Where you screwed a little piece of copper wire around to different places on a hunk of crystal and got different stations?

IT WAS as simple as that. This monkey had dug up a kind of dirty looking crystal rock that must have been packed with concentrated electrons. Whatever it was that trapped them there, they couldn't escape except through a metal conductor. All he had to do was drill a hole, stick in the bare wires and turn on the connection. The electrons must have kept renewing themselves, because the rock never seemed to fade. It gave out with direct current, but there was no way of measuring it without a meter.

Bud took a hunk of rock in one hand and picked up a socket with a light bulb screwed in and a short length of wire attached. He touched the bare ends of the wire to the rock and nothing happened. I took another look at the bulb.

"Hell. No wonder," I told him. "The bulb's no good. It's burned out."

"Oh. Maybe that's it. I'll tell Torg to get me some more globes."

"Where's he gonna get 'em?"

"Same place he got all this stuff. He found it."

"Oh, yeah. Found it." This family seemed to have terrific luck finding things. Any time they wanted something, they just went out and found it. Yeah. Like Sullie found me . . .

The way Bud found this rock, he was moping around up in the hills one day when he was just a kid. He sees this big rock sticking out and starts chipping at it with his knife. All at once he gets a shock that knocks him end over backwards. It took him several years to figure out what it was. And then he sent for this correspondence course and started making with the electricity.

That crazy old washer of Maw's was fitted up with a little motor tucked up out of sight under the wooden frame. This guy Bud had no idea what he was doing, but he was doing all right anyhow. He'd motorized most of the stationary farm machinery around the place. But he hadn't been able to apply the rock to moving equipment. He didn't know enough about combustion engines to make the necessary conversion.

I began to see tremendous possibilities in the thing. But I tried not to show any excitement. I didn't want Bud to get suspicious. I went around the shed sorting out the junk and checking it over. I was itching to try a few stunts with that rock myself.

PRETTY soon Torg came in, and he looked more like Sulie. He was a big blond guy with a lazy grin and a bad limp.

"Well," he said to Bud, "I see you decided to make up with him."

"He's all right," Bud muttered. "He knows about 'lectricity."

"Bud, he ain't very sociable," Torg told me. "If you can get along with him, you're pretty good." He was looking me over. Sizing me up like a big, good-natured cat getting ready to pounce on a friend, just for exercise.

"I get along," I said. I was all set for some embarrassing questions. But they never came. One thing about this family, they were not curious. Not a bit.

"I guess you ain't started laughing at him yet," Torg said.

"I don't see anything to laugh at."

"Don't you think it's kinda funny—the way he gets 'lectricity?"

"I don't think it's funny."

"Other folks do. They think it's a hell of a joke. What'd they say in town that time we tried to tell 'em about it, Bud?"

"Said we was stealin' it!"

"Uh-huh. Ain't that the limit? Folks think if you find somethin' you musta stole it." He said it dead pan, like he meant it. Like he really believed if you picked something up it was okay to take it home. Something like a half-horse motor, for instance. Yeah. Nice guy. Pleasant as hell. And I'd trust him about as quick as I'd pet a rattle snake.

"They meant you were tapping a power line," I said. "But there aren't any lines up this way, are there?"

"Not that I ever heard tell of," Torg said. "I can't figure out what they need all those lines for anyway. Why is that?"

"The electric companies manufacture the current. Then they pipe it out

through the cables and charge people for using it."

"Uh-huh. But couldn't folks just use the raw stuff? Like Bud here?"

"No, because they haven't got it."

"That's how I figured. Them big companies, they get a hold on a thing—and kind of—"

"Monopoly?"

"Yeah, like that. An' they won't let nobody else have any 'less they pay the company. It's the same way with oil an' gas an' even water. Shucks, the stuff's there. Anybody ought to be able to help themselves. But no. These big companies fence it off and put it through a lot of machinery to make it cost more, an' folks got to pay for everything they get. I read where they're even startin' to manufacture air. It ain't right."

The guy was an anarchist. Any other time I'd try to poke some sense into him. But not this time. No sir. I had my eye on that rock. As long as he thought it was just common, ordinary stuff, like oil and gas and water, he could believe in anarchy or any other damn thing for all I cared.

WELL, there it was. That laid it right in my lap. As neat a little package of luck as you could want. And these dopes didn't know from nothing. They thought the electric companies manufactured power out of rocks. They thought they could get power the same way and not upset every utility company in the world.

There was one thing, though. I couldn't afford any complications. I'd have to watch my step with Sulie . . .

And I did. Believe me, I worked overtime giving her the brush-off. And it was a crime, brother. It was a shame. That great big beautiful doll. She wasn't liking it one bit. She kept tagging after us—Bud and me, and getting

herself in the way.

We took turns yelling: "Maw! Call Sulie!" And Maw did. But five minutes later Sulie was back again. She didn't know anything about the biological urge. She was just following her instincts and she didn't care where they took her.

There was a reason for this. And the same reason explained a lot of things about this family. I got the picture a little bit at a time.

Paw was dead. He died of a bullet wound. I never did find out how he got it. But if he was anything like his son Torg, he was probably a bank robber. This place they had back in the hills was practically a hideout. They never had any visitors. Torg drove an old rattletrap in to town once in a while for supplies—and anything else he could pick up. But outside of that they never had any contacts. That explained why Sulie was wild. But I kept wondering why they took me in. Pretty soon I found out.

Bud and I decided to make a trip up in the hills for a fresh supply of the rock. Between the two of us we'd rigged up quite a lot of experiments out of his junk. Maw had an electric iron that was a dorb. No cord to get tangled up in. Torg showed up one day with a bunch of live bulbs and we put a few lights in the house. Maw was tickled pink. The light was steady and clear. Just like boughten electricity.

I was anxious to experiment with a radio, but it wasn't safe to mention it. Because Torg would get in his jalopy and go find one. I was afraid he'd bring the cops home on his heels any day. The way he kept finding stuff.

At the supper table one night, I was telling Maw how even a sewing machine could be run by electricity. A couple days later here comes Torg, driving up to the back door with an old Singer

machine in the back of the car. The guy was wonderful.

Of course you can't just walk in a place and walk out with a sewing machine under your arm. What Torg did, he'd locate what he wanted and make a deal for a swap. Something he could pick up. Then he'd go out and pick up whatever the other guy wanted and drive off with his sewing machine, or what have you.

I kept thinking we'd blow something, but we never did. The motive force that came out of the rock seemed to adapt itself to the capacity of the outlet.

Anyway we'd used up most of the rock with one thing and another. So we had to have some more. Sulie wanted to go along. We said no. We said no in several different ways. Finally we had to yell for Maw. It was quite a tussle. Sulie flung herself at me and dug in with teeth and claws and hung on.

"Take me with you! Take me with you!" It was all she could say.

I ripped her loose. I tore my shirt—Torg's shirt. I had claw marks all over me by the time Maw got there. I was holding this beautiful, wild-eyed heathen by both arms and thinking of a strait-jacket. But all Maw did was box her ears, and she marched right in the house.

Maw turned around and gave me a look. It made me a little uneasy, that look. Not that it was mad. It just said too much. Like maybe I had a certain responsibility and she was going to see that I took care of it. What the hell, I thought. Maybe I was playing it all wrong.

IT WAS quite a hike to where the rock was. We came out of the woods and started to cross a creek. On the other side, the hill went almost straight up, with a lot of boulders and scrub brush.

Sulie slid from behind a bush and stood there looking like a sweet little girl who'd just done something cute.

Bud said: "You brat! Go on back home. Git!"

"I can come here if I want, Bud Stokes. Maw said I shouldn't walk with you, an' I didn't. So there!" Then she looked at me and her eyes got big and her lip started quivering. "I want to talk to you, Dan. Please."

"Yeah, yeah," I said. "It's a good trick, if you can do it. Only you always pick the wrong time. Right now I'm busy."

"You're always busy! You won't never talk to me. You'll be sorry. You just wait an' see!"

I was sorry already. The sun came slanting through the trees and that tawny hair rippled and sparkled, and almost seemed to breathe with her. She had her hands behind her like she was holding herself in, and her arms pulled her dress tight in front. Her eyes had little licking flames in them.

I started toward her and Bud pulled my arm. "Come on," he said. "Don't pay any 'tention to her. If she tries to follow us up the slope, I'll throw rocks at her."

So I turned around and went with him. Barron, you're a chump, I said to myself. You keep this up and it'll get to be a habit. You'll be losing your manhood.

Sulie just stood there and watched us cross the creek and start climbing. We came up under a ledge and I looked back at her. She was standing on the other side of the creek and she swung her arm back in that stiff overhand way girls do, and threw something at us.

I had to laugh because it landed a good twelve yards off to the left and ahead of us. The next minute the hill heaved and belched. There was a terrific roar. Something sucked all my

breath out and flung me against the wall like it was mad at me. I dropped in a heap and wondered where I'd heard that loud ringing sound in my ears before.

Then I remembered. Artillery. No, couldn't be. Not here. Bombs. It must be bombs! Sulie! "Oh, my God!" I kept thinking. "Where's Sulie?" I was paralyzed. Numb. I couldn't move. Then things started coming down. They slid and rumbled and bumped and pretty soon they all got together in one big growl that kept getting louder and louder.

It was the ledge that saved us. Solid rock, and it stayed there. After a while the growl started slowing down. I tried to unscramble my arms and legs and found that part of them belonged to Bud. The dust was choking me, but he didn't make a sound.

I tried to wipe the dust out of my eyes, but I couldn't see a thing. The air was solid with it. I thought we'd smother in there. I didn't know how we were going to get out. I was afraid to move him. I thought maybe he was dead. I touched him and he groaned and spit.

"Dynamite," he said. "That damn brat threw dynamite at us."

"Where'd she get it?"

"We keep it. For stumps and boulders."

"It's a wonder you wouldn't put it away in a safe place," I coughed. "It's a wonder you wouldn't have sense enough not to leave it laying around."

"It ain't laying around. It's in the tool shed."

"That's no place for it. Someone's liable to stub their toe on it."

"Where else you gonna put it?"

"Bury it."

"Where you gonna bury it?"

"Hell. You got damn near two hundred acres . . ."

WE SAT there like that. Choking and arguing back and forth about where a person ought to keep a box of dynamite. We were groggy. Sure. But it was our nerves more than anything else. We were trying not to have hysterics.

Bud said: "We got to get out of here."

"Yeah, yeah," I said, and I started pawing around for the shovel and pick we'd brought with us. The way I felt, I didn't care if I never got out of there. I didn't think it was worth the trouble. I didn't think my legs would hold me up.

I noticed Bud didn't try to stand up either. He crawled out on his hands and knees. I crawled out after him. The side of his head was bleeding through the thick coat of dust. I thought he ought to soak his head.

"You ought to soak your head," I said.

"You go soak your own head! It's your fault she's actin' up this way."

"Hey. Don't get tough with me, fella. I'll paste you one."

"You do an' I'll kick your teeth in."

"Why, you ornery little runt. I'll take you apart with one hand!"

"Oh, yeah?" He reached for the pick and I got my hands on the shovel. Get this. Neither one of us can stand up, and we're talking like we're going to tear each other apart. That's what dynamite does to you.

Then all at once I did stand up. The dust haze was thinning out and I was looking down at the creek. Or where the creek used to be. Now there was a tall, uneven pile of dirt with rocks and uprooted shrubbery sticking out of it.

"Look!" I croaked. "Sulie! She's buried there." And I was trying to run down the slope. My legs wobbled like they were rubber. I could hear Bud

falling down behind me.

"Great Jehosaphat!" he was yelling. "Maw'll skin us alive!"

We started digging like crazy. But that didn't last very long. Pretty soon we settled down to more systematic tunneling and scraping. Just as quick as we got in two or three feet, the top slid down. So it was dig and scrape. Shovel and heave. And any minute one of those loose boulders might come waddling down and spoil the whole business, if it didn't mash us.

We were muddy with sweat. You never saw two more determined guys in your life. A little while ago we were ready for the hospital. Now we were moving tons of dirt and thinking nothing of it. I know I wasn't thinking. My mind had quit. I was just a machine. Digging.

I don't know how long we kept at it. Working against time. We made a hell of a hole in that pile, going toward the middle. That's about where Sulie was standing. I straightened up and started to hand the shovel to Bud. I thought we ought to change tools for a while. Then I dropped the shovel.

She was sitting there, demure as you please. Watching us dig. Sitting on a log, all sweet and clean and wide-eyed. And quiet as a mouse. Being good and not bothering us. Like we'd asked her to do a thousand times. This one time—this one goddamned time she did it!

I STARTED toward her and rage had me by the throat. Choking. I could feel my head getting hot. The blood was pounding. Beating my skull to white heat. I went toward her and so help me, I meant to mangle her. I meant to get her by the hair and beat her head against a tree. I meant to break every bone in her body and shake her until they rattled. I went toward her and fell flat on my face.

I thought I was strangling. Every breath was a hot blast. My dusty lungs were shriveled. I felt like the Gestapo had been working on me for nine days and nights. I felt like I was dying—the hard way. Then she put something cool and wet on the back of my neck. Pretty soon she was washing my face. I almost forgot how mad I was. Almost—but not quite.

"Where's your brother, you murdering cat?"

"He's just settin' there."

I looked and he was. He'd sat down right in his tracks. In the dirt, with his head between his knees.

"Go take care of him. He's hurt."

"Danny, I didn't mean for you to be hurt. I was aimin' for that dirty old rock. That's what I was aimin' for."

Women are the damndest things. None of the rest of them even suspected that the reason I was breaking my neck to stay away from her was on account of the rock. But she knew. And she was out to get the rock if she had to blow us up with it.

Bud and I finally managed to drag ourselves around the mountain of dirt to where the creek was spreading all over the place. The water was muddy but we drank it. Then we both soaked our heads. I sat up and Sulie was muttering: "Damn old rock." Looking up at the hill with a scowl like Black Friday.

I looked and I had to gasp. The whole side of the hill was laid open and there it was. The sun hit it and made rainbow lights all over the surface. And what surface. It was tremendous. It must have been two hundred feet long and half as high. And God knows how deep it went. I was trying to think of a word. Radiant. That was it. The Radiant Rock. And nobody in the world knew what it was—except me.

Sulie was sweet as hell and helpful

as the devil. She carried the pick and shovel for us. She was meek as a lamb and gentle as a dove. But she walked like Aphrodite. It was a pleasure to watch her. But right then I wanted to boot that beautiful frame all the way home.

When Maw saw us, she let out a shriek. "What in the name of the great Jehovah you been doin' now?"

"Never mind what we been doing," I said. "This daughter of yours has been going around tossing dynamite here and there. I think you better do something about it before she wipes out the whole country."

"I ain't surprised," Maw said calmly. "Sulie, set the table. Supper's 'most ready. And you two go on out to the pump." Just like that. The Stokes family.

Right after supper I wanted to go to bed. But Maw got me cornered in the front room. She didn't waste any words either.

"I think it's time you made up your mind about Sulie," she said.

"About—?"

"I want Sulie should wed. I think you're the man can handle her. And I'm willing you should have her."

"Well—uh, thanks. Thanks a lot—"

SURE, I got it. Now I knew why they took me in and made like I was one of the family. Yeah. Sulie. Beautiful Sulie. A combination kitten-cobra. Just the thing! No man should be without one.

On top of all my other troubles, I should have that on my hands. One more day like today and I'd be an old man. If I had to look forward to a lifetime of it . . .

I said: "Much as I admire your daughter, Maw Stokes, marriage never entered my head. The fact is I can't take care of a wife right now. I'm

broke. And not only broke—I'm a bum. And not only a bum—I think the cops are looking for me. I think I killed a guy in a fight just before you met me."

"Uh-huh," Maw said. Her rocker was going back and forth with a steady, determined sound. "I thought maybe it was somethin' worse. I got a little money Paw left me. You got a home here. The cops ain't likely to come lookin' for you up this way. And Sulie—she needs to wed. You both do. It'd be the makin' of you."

It'd be the makin' of a bloody riot, I thought. Like tying two wild cats together by their tails. With my temper and her temperament . . .

"Give me a couple days to think it over," I said. "I want to look at it from all angles. Sulie deserves the best, but I'm not sure I'm it."

"Well, all right, then," Maw said. "But I wouldn't take too long if I was you."

I didn't know if it was a warning or a threat. But I thought maybe in two or three days I'd have an answer to a letter I wrote.

Sure. I wrote direct to the Chairman of the Board of Allied Power and Light. Old W. Percival Stickney himself. I marked it "Personal and Confidential." And I gave him a damn good reference. I gave him the name of Colonel Matthew Bragg, who used to be a vice-president of the corporation before he went in the Army.

And the old man—the colonel, he'd remember me all right. I had my first Army experience in his regiment. And I got along fine with him. Any time he was in a hurry, he'd send for me to drive his car. He said I was the only guy in the Army with guts enough to drive straight through stalled traffic without slowing down. Yeah. I got along fine with the colonel. It was the

sergeants . . .

Anyway I told the Chairman of the Board that I'd discovered an element that trapped electrons and released them through a common conductor in controlled current. I told him it would revolutionize the science of electronics. I told him it was so stupendous it would cause a panic if even a hint of it leaked out. And I asked him to let me know when I could meet his confidential representative in the nearest town. I figured Torg could drive me in to town and I could lay the ground work for a deal I had in mind. Yeah. That's the way I figured, but it didn't work out that way.

After Maw had spoke her mind, she wasn't much help with Sulie any more. She acted like Sulie was my responsibility now. She acted like she wanted to show me what a fine mother-in-law she'd make. No interference.

Bud and I were trying to get a pack together next day. We were pretty stiff and sore, but we figured we'd take it easy and spend a little time with the rock, exploring. Sulie wanted to go along. We said no. We said no in all the usual ways. Finally we yelled for Maw.

No Maw.

"Maw!" I yelled. "Call Sulie!"

"What's she done?" Maw yelled back.

"She's pestering us again."

"Well, take the broomstick to her. You know where 'tis."

I wanted to, all right. But I knew better. Once I started that it would be just like taking up an option. It would be like proving up on a claim. I'd be practically married.

I looked at Bud and he looked at me, and we both shook our heads. If we took her along, she'd be a damn nuisance. Sure. But it was suicidal to try to leave her behind. So we com-

promised and took her along. We loaded her down with the lunch and one thing and another, so she was pretty well occupied on the hike.

THE rock was shimmering in the sun. Throwing off rainbow lights. The Radiant Rock. The creek had backed up and started off in another direction. And the slope wasn't straight up and down any more. It was an easy climb up to the rock. Sulie had done a pretty good job with her blasting at that.

Except for one thing. The end of the rock where Bud had been chipping off pieces was hurried. Big as the exposed surface was, there was no place where we could get a foothold and enough leverage to break off more than a small handful at a time. We tried it and it was slow and awkward. And damn discouraging.

We knocked off and went down in the woods and cooked lunch. I'd rigged up a little hot plate, so we had coffee and fried ham sandwiches. I was thinking about the Army. Yeah. Field kitchens. Electric light wherever you landed, without waiting for batteries. Diesels, cables to be brought up and assembled. Radio. If the rock would only work on radio . . .

I almost forgot about Sulie. I will say she was behaving pretty good. She cooked the lunch and waited on us hand and foot. Yeah. She couldn't do enough for us. For me. I didn't like the hopeful look in her eyes. Because there wasn't anything I could do about it. I had to be more careful than ever now. One false step and I was a gone gosling.

We left her cleaning up the lunch things and went up to make a slow circuit of the rock. Hoping to find one spot where we could break off a sizeable hunk. The rock wasn't heavy. It

weighed about ten pounds to the cubic foot. I'd say it was about the weight of sugar. So we figured to be able to carry a good sized piece back home between the two of us.

I wanted to see how far I could step up the current. Although the size of the piece didn't seem to make any difference—we got the same volume from all sizes and shapes of the rock—still I figured a large solid ought to contain more electrons. And there ought to be a way to make them act all at once in a heavy charge.

Then Sulie did something neither one of us had thought of doing. Luckily, she'd been watching us handle the rock and had sense enough to put on the gloves I'd left behind.

We'd almost finished our circuit of the rock without finding any outcropping big enough to satisfy us. I saw Sulie down on her knees near one corner of the rock. And I saw she had my gloves on. I thought she was planting another load of dynamite and I yelled: "Hey!"

The next minute there was a crackling and a spurt. I saw a puff of dust and Sulie was rolling over and over down the hill. I didn't hear anything because I was running after Sulie. But Bud said afterwards he heard a splitting noise.

Sulie was stunned. She had a bruise over her right eye. I picked her up and carried her down to the water. Bud came running after us. He was excited.

"What the hell did she do?" he yelled.

"I don't know, but she sure knocked herself out." I was getting worried. If she just got a hump on the head she ought to come out of it. But she didn't. I pulled the gloves off and her left wrist was red and puffed. It looked like it was sprained.

"She split the rock," Bud was puffing. "She split the whole corner off. Look, you can see it."

And I could. There was an irregular fissure running diagonally across the lower left hand corner of the rock. But I didn't have time to worry about that because Sulie was starting to get blue. She was hardly breathing. I was good and scared. I bound her wrist up with my handkerchief and picked her up and started for home fast.

"Hey, where you goin'?" Bud yelled. "Maw won't like it if you—"

I said: "Sulie's dying, you crazy fool!" And I kept on going.

I never walked so fast in my life. I was afraid to run for fear I'd jog her too much. But I went over rocks and logs like they weren't there. And if Sulie had any weight, I didn't know it. I was too scared to know anything.

MAW put her to bed and wrapped her up in blankets and put the electric iron on her feet. Maw was calm enough. But she was sore.

She said: "I knew one of yez'd get a good shock off that rock sooner or later. Foolin' around the way you do."

"Shock?"

"Natchelly. She's sufferin' from shock. Can't you see how blue she is?"

"Yeah, yeah," I said. "But she's not burned. Not like an electric shock would do."

"I don't know nothin' about that. But it musta give her an awful wallop, like if she was in a bad accident. I mind the time when I was a girl an' there was a train wreck not five mile from our place. There was some of them we couldn't tell if they was dead or not. They just laid there and turned blue with shock."

That made sense, all right. Sulie had got a terrific wallop. It sprained her wrist and knocked her for a loop.

But I still didn't get it. I still didn't know what the hell she'd done.

It was Bud that figured it out. He just left everything where it was and followed us home. We both stood around Sulie's room looking silly until Maw chased us out.

We went down and sat on the side porch and Bud told me. He said: "That brat! She mighta blew us all to kingdom come."

"It wasn't dynamite this time."

"Hub-uh. It was the rock. She pulled it off the stove with the wire attached an' went up and touched the wire to the main rock. God knows what she done it for. Just to be cute, I s'pose. And the piece she had in her hand exploded like—like—"

"Atoms."

"Who's Adams?"

"Atoms. A-t-o-m-s. You smash 'em and they explode."

"Oh. We never had that in correspondence school. What do you wanta smash 'em for?"

"Never mind," I said. "It's a long story. But it's what saved Sulie. If it hadn't been powerful enough to knock her away, she might have been—destroyed. It's a wonder we never thought of testing the rock on itself." And I went out to the shed and tried it with a couple of small pieces.

I was careful, too. I fastened each piece on the end of a long, heavy stick. I sunk a short length of wire in one piece and then brought them together slow. The minute the contact was made there was a crackle and a puff of dust. I felt the jar at the end of the sticks.

The rock had disappeared. One of the sticks was split half way down. And I had to hunt for the wire. It was melted.

I looked around the shed and I realized we had been playing with lightning. It was just dumb luck we hadn't

managed to explode ourselves into atomic dust. Dumb luck and Sullie. Otherwise I might have hitched up the transformer by this time and fooled around until everything went ph-h-t!

SULLIE was up and around in a couple days. But I still hadn't got an answer to my letter. I was getting plenty anxious. I had plenty on my mind that afternoon when I came around the house and heard Sullie's voice.

She said: "No. I never did. Honest." And she sounded breathless.

Some guy said: "Baby, you got an awful lot to learn. Let's you and me take a little walk. I'll tell you all about it."

I came around the corner and damned if it wasn't a sergeant. Yeah. A big wolf sergeant. And he had Sullie in his arms. And he had his face in her hair.

Maybe he was teaching her to dance, like he said afterwards. But I didn't think so at the time. So I hit him. I yanked Sullie behind me and hit him flush on the jaw. While he was getting up, I grabbed Sullie and threw her up on the porch. I heard Maw's milk pans go clattering. And then he was up and I went after him.

I wanted to whip him. I wanted to make him whine. I wanted to wear him down. And make him keep getting up and going down until he screamed. Until I broke his nerve.

I was mad, sure. But this time it wasn't hot. It was cold. I let him come in slugging and I batted his head back and forth. Not hard. Just enough to tease him. My ribs and shoulder were still sore and he was hurting me. So I stepped in and doubled him with a left to the belly and clipped him on the side of the head. He went over spread eagle. Like he was doing a

handspring.

He wasn't out. I wasn't ready for that yet. He crawled around trying to get up and I stood over him. He got up on one knee and I knew he was going to play it dirty. I was ready for it. Before he could throw that foul, I had him by the throat. I had him on his feet, grunting and pawing, while I punched his head with short jabs. Then I let go of him and slapped him square in the puss with my open hand. He sat down and I leaned over to yank him up again.

Somebody barked: "Bar-ron!"

My head snapped back and I went around in about face like I was greased for speed. The old man was standing on the porch. Bristling. Yeah. Colonel Bragg. In person. And I hadn't planned it that way at all.

He said: "Still up to your old tricks, I see. Who let you out of the Army?"

"I been discharged, sir."

"Dishonorably?"

"Yessir."

"Come in here. Sergeant, go sit in the car. And stay there."

I followed the old man into the front room. He sat down and I sat down. Then there was quite a long spell of silence. I just sat there. I didn't know what to say. I knew it was no use trying to finagle the old man. I knew the whole fancy deal was off as far as I was concerned.

I looked over at him, and he said: "Well?"

So I came right out with it. I said: "I want to get back in service."

"Is that why you went through all this confounded rigamarole? Is that why you've been writing fairy tales to a man like Stickney, and using my name as a reference? Is it?"

I said: "Yessir," and he started to get up. "Only it wasn't a fairy tale. I really have got something here. It's

terrific. And the Army can have it, if they'll take me with it."

HE SAT down again. He blew out his breath. Then he just looked at me. He's got cold, steady blue eyes. He's a little guy with stiff gray hair and a clipped mustache. His mouth is wide and hard. He's a tough nut. And he's too damned smart for anybody in the world. He can read your mind.

Finally he said: "You have the most colossal nerve of anybody I ever heard of—except Hitler. You should have been a Kraut. You'd be right up there among 'em. You'd probably be Hitler's right hand man. You just happened to get born on the wrong side of the ocean. Why don't you get to work and organize a fifth column? Now that the Army's decided it can get along without you."

He was getting me sore and he knew it. He did it on purpose. He knew I'd blow my top, and I did. The next thing I knew I was walking up and down the room waving my arms and yelling.

"A chump! That's what I am. Just a chump. Here I've discovered an element with enough energy in a fistful to power a whole camp anywhere in the world. And like a fool I was going to give it to you. Yeah. Make the Army a present of it. Like a fool I was going to let Inter-Allied Power and Light in on the secret so they could protect their interests. Yeah. And all I wanted in return was a little help to get back in service. Any branch. I don't care. Just so there's a uniform goes with it."

I went over to the wall where we'd stuck a light bulb. I turned it on. "There. You see that? Now look at it." And I pulled it off the wall and held it in my hand. "That's only a small sample of what I was going to

give you. All right, so the Army don't want me. So I'm not fit for any kind of service. So I don't have to keep on being a chump. Inter-Allied will pay for this now. And they'll pay through the nose or I'll wreck 'em. I'll sell this stuff for a hundred dollars an ounce. Two hundred, three hundred—any price I want to name! And I'll put Inter-Allied and all its subsidiaries out of business!"

I went up and down the room yelling and waving this bulb, and it was still lit. And all the old man did was take out a cigar and peel off the wrapper and look around for an ash tray. I just let him look, and I went on planning the massacre of Inter-Allied Power and Light. After a while I began to run down. Besides the damn 100-watt bulb was getting hot.

The old man said: "You'll never make a successful blackmailer. You get too excited. You lack the patience to tease your victim along. You thought you could use this thing as a club. You thought you could force a deal with the Army and Inter-Allied. And part of the deal was to get that dishonorable discharge revoked and put you back in service. Well, you've failed. You lost your head and shot your wad. You've used up all your ammunition. And what did it get you? Exactly nothing."

At first I didn't get it. I just stood there and watched him take a drag on his cigar.

He said: "I know you didn't create this element, because there's no sign of a laboratory around here. I looked. Therefore, it must be a natural element. All I have to do is bring in the Army and take over. In time of war it's comparatively simple to take possession of property for military purposes . . . And leave you on the outside looking in."

"No, you won't," I said. "I'll de-

stroy it. And don't think I can't do it in a hurry. I'd just like to give you a little demonstration."

"Before you do, suppose we review the situation to date. Just to make sure I've got it all straight. I have to make a report to Stickney, you know. He sent me your letter. Sit down! You bull-headed ape! And stop acting like I've come all the way out here in the sticks just to annoy you."

I turned around like I was looking for a chair so he couldn't see me grin. I knew when he stopped being polite and started barking at me things were looking up.

SO WE reviewed the situation. And when we got all through, he knew more about the damn rock than I did. Sure. He got it all out of me. The works. Even how Torg kept us supplied with equipment. He examined everything we'd done.

Then he said: "Of course, you realize I can't make any promises about getting your case reviewed. Your record is one continuous repetition of violence and insubordination." He gave me that poker face. But I knew what he'd done. He'd already checked up on me.

"I had a little trouble after I got out of the Army, too," I said, and I told him.

"H'm, yes," he said. "I think you can quit worrying about that last little fracas. All four of those crap shooters are in jail. The police department is still trying to figure out how you managed to walk away from the wreckage. Otherwise they're not particularly curious. They've been trying to collar those hoodlums for some time."

Well, that was one load off my mind anyway. At least I hadn't killed the guy. The cops weren't looking for me.

"These people—this Stokes family," he said. "Of course, we'll see that

they're taken care of with adequate remuneration and so on. There's just one thing that bothers me. It's absolutely vital that we keep this whole thing secret. How are we going to keep them quiet?"

I looked at the knuckles on my right hand. The skin was off where I'd grazed the sergeant's teeth. And I was mad all over again.

"I can do it if I have to," I said. "If I thought there was any chance of getting back in service and getting shipped across—maybe it wouldn't be so bad."

"What have you in mind?"

"Marriage."

"H'm, yes. I see. I've noticed the young lady. Surely you haven't any objections to her?"

"I got objections," I said. "She throws things."

"Oh, well. What woman doesn't? What's a few broken dishes?"

"Dishes don't satisfy this one. When she gets mad she throws dynamite."

He coughed and sputtered. I thought there for a minute he'd swallowed his cigar. "She—er, h'rumpf! Of course you can always neglect to purchase the dynamite when she sends you to the store. Maybe an Australian boomerang . . . But then that's your problem . . . You—er, you think that by marrying the young lady you can control the rest of the family?"

"They'll do what I tell 'em."

AND they did, too. I went up to see them the other day. I had to have a special pass. They stayed right where they were. But you can't get anywhere near the house now without a pass. Because there's a five hundred acre experimental station all around the place. And a charged wire fence with armed guards all around that.

Maw cooks for the laboratory crew, and bosses the whole gang between meals. Bud, he's got a job in the lab and he's pretty good at it, too. He catches on fast and he don't have a lot of unnecessary knowledge to bother him. Torg is a special guard—if you can believe this—in charge of the storehouse. It's his job to see that nobody steals so much as a screw out of the place. So far the inventory checks. Nothing missing. Just another example of the old man's psychology.

Sure, they're sitting pretty. They got everything they want. Even a radio. Because the Radiant Rock works on radio. It works on anything. But you won't hear anybody talking about it. You won't hear anybody calling it Radiant. Or even rock. Because it's reduced to something else before it's put in use.

When I said goodbye to Maw, she gave me some things to take back with me. Some little crocheted doo-dads for the house. Sulie's domestic as hell. She quieted down the day we were married. Well—not the same day. But pretty soon afterwards. You know

what I mean. Marriage does something to you.

I'm teaching her a lot of things. But there are some things I didn't have to teach her. I didn't have to teach her how to walk and hold her head and look like five million dollars.

When we go into a restaurant, everybody stops eating. The waiters just stand there. She looks like something that just came in on wings. She looks like something you dream about when you're a long way from home. She looks like all the things you've ever wanted, all wrapped up in one gorgeous bundle. And it's mine, brother. It's all mine. Sure I'm crazy about her. Who wouldn't be?

And when I shove off, I don't have to worry. She's got plenty to keep her busy and happy. Danny, Junior is quite a guy. A little on the tough side. But he'll outgrow that. If he don't I'll put him in the Army. Yeah. The Army. It's tough and it's hard and it's one, two, three, four and keep your nose clean. Just what I was cut out for. And I'm doing all right there, too. I'm a sergeant.

PEACEFUL WEAPON OF WAR

ONE of the current war's most potent weapons is the camera, for every modern military operation depends largely on photographs which are brought back from flights and interpreted by experts.

Pioneered during World War I, air photography has been developed into a highly specialized field. Early "Aerial photographers" obtained their shots of enemy ground dispositions by leaning over the side of open cockpit planes and training ordinary cameras on their "targets."

At the outbreak of the present war, the RAF had produced the F-24 which permitted automatic control and operation so that a series of photos could be taken at predetermined intervals and large areas covered with accuracy. Unprecedented operations of modern warfare soon demanded the F-24 be improved to contain self-contained sections easily interchangeable. Accordingly, the F-24 has become merely the foundation upon which later developments were based.

Since cameras are the unflinching eyes of military

machines, the matter of recruiting and training air-photographers is an important problem. Included in the ranks of these "sky Shuttermen" are hundreds of skilled newspaper photographers who are now giving their unequalled ability to Uncle Sam.

Little publicized is the fact that aerial photos prepared the smashing victory the U. S. scored in the battle of the Coral Sea. Many photo missions are carried out by unarmed planes flying at high altitudes over enemy territory.

These operations are sometimes conducted months before a bombing attack is launched. While a single photo may show a temporary surface concentration by the enemy, several weeks may be required to picture the progress of a ship building plant or important fortification.

Day and night "winged cameras" continue to present clearly and speedily the information anxiously desired by our tactical strategists.—Billy Decker.

ANTS MAKE WAR

By WAYNE HARRIS

ON THE South Atlantic island of Madeira, unknown and unnoticed by all but a few men, there occurred in this century a full-fledged international war. Without benefit of newspaper or radio publicity the combatants fiercely engaged in a "do or die" battle aimed at obliterating the enemy—or perishing in the effort. It was a meeting of two great world-conquering races, and one of the bloodiest campaigns in history ended in a costly but complete victory.

Who were the opponents? They were the Myrmecine genus *Pheidole* megacephala and the Dolichoderine genus *Iridomyrmex humilis*, two of the great warrior ant species of the world.

Ants, of course, are subjected to the same trials and struggles with which the human race is plagued. Within ant communities the functions and responsibilities are divided, each individual doing his share. Increases in population force them to seek new sources of food. This brings them into conflict with neighboring communities. The ensuing battle ends in victory for the most powerful, well-organized community and their opponent is destroyed or flees.

Such local wars are constantly occurring throughout the ant world. For example, in the tropics the hollow twigs of trees of the genus *Cecropia* are inhabited by ants of the genus *Azteca*. While the trees are comparatively young, the queens of the *Azteca* enter the twigs seeking convenient localities to begin their communities. They generally choose the soft, pithy interior of the branches which is almost divided into isolated cubicles by the solid woody septa appearing at intervals.

Each queen then lays her eggs and the individual communities are begun. The young ants mature and become workers. Their job is to penetrate to the outside of the twig and find food for the rest of their comrades and their reigning queen.

This immediately brings them into sharp conflict with the workers of the neighboring community. They live in the same twig, peacefully enough, but the search for food brings war.

The fighting that occurs is as violent and as vigorous as any man-made war. The colonies put their backs to the wheel, for defeat means that their homeland will be invaded. Sure enough, that colony which by its more fortunate position is able to defeat the enemy's workers perforates the septum that separates the two and forces the other to flee, usually entirely off the tree. The defeated colony carries with it such of its young that it can transport and abandons the rest. The invaders generally adopt any captured young, and they later become loyal members of their foster community.

The victors now settle in the new territory and rebuild it to suit their own desires. Sooner or later, however, the expansion of the community

and its increase in numbers demand new food sources, and a third colony is attacked. The same war recurs until they become masters of the entire branch.

Meanwhile the other branches of the *Cecropiae* have produced their own wars and, in each, one colony has become master. The next phase takes a good deal longer for the individual victors have more room in which to expand. Eventually, however, they come into conflict with each other and in the end one colony reigns supreme.

Such local wars, however, are only skirmishes when compared to the gigantic superwars between the two species *Pheidole* and *Humilis*. These two ant nations have achieved a unity within their species which has given them the strength to expand on an immense scale. A *Pheidole* community is divided into soldiers and workers, and this specialization is an initial source of strength. The structure of the mandibles, or jaws of the soldier has been another important weapon in their conquering career. But it was the new habits of cultivating aphids and also becoming adapted to nesting in ships that brought world-wide dominance to the *Pheidole*.

Each island to which they were brought by man's adventures has had the same experience. *Pheidole* established itself in the blakest area of the land where it alone was fit to survive. There it began mass raids on the other ants, murdering and dispersing each specie in turn. It became completely dominant—until it met *Humilis*.

The workers of *Humilis* are even smaller and less protected than *Pheidole*. Normally we would suppose them to be a pushover for the more aggressive species. In one social characteristic they were supreme. The *Pheidoles* recognized only the queen which founded them. This made them highly vulnerable for if an invader destroyed this single queen the colony was destroyed. *Humilis*, on the other hand developed many queens, and they were easily and inexpensively spared. Each group, therefore, could divide and divide again, and each division taking a few queens with it was virtually impregnable against extermination.

Armed with this weapon, *Humilis* went on a rampage a few years ago. From Argentina it spread through the South America and then North America. It crossed the Atlantic and appeared in such widely separated places as Portugal, the Cape Colony, Italy, France and Germany. Within a period of years it covered almost half the globe.

Finally, on the island of Madeira it met the old conqueror, *Pheidole*. There, where *Pheidole* had completely destroyed every other species of ant, *Humilis* came and made its bid for domination. The two world-conquering races met in mortal combat. After more than thirty years of constant battle *Humilis* emerged victorious.

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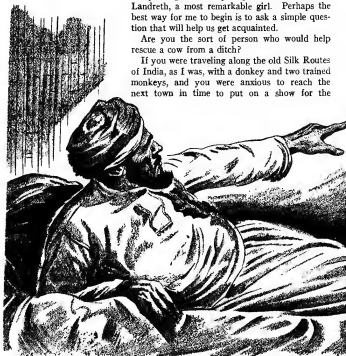
THE SCARLET

Only in India could a man be murdered, and yet not be dead! Nor could he be more than one person!

BEFORE I tell you how I was murdered and what strange experiences befell me afterward, I must first let you know what sort of person I am—or was—and I must tell you many things about my acquaintance with Faye Landreth, a most remarkable girl. Perhaps the best way for me to begin is to ask a simple question that will help us get acquainted.

Are you the sort of person who would help rescue a cow from a ditch?

If you were traveling along the old Silk Routes of India, as I was, with a donkey and two trained monkeys, and you were anxious to reach the next town in time to put on a show for the



SWORDSMEN

BY DON WILCOX

"Take her out and behead her!"
Faye Landreth shrank back in
terror at the savage command



afternoon crowds at the marketplace, would you stop to help a wheezy little old Hindu who was in a dither about saving the life of a sacred cow?

If so, you and I are going to understand each other from the start. My name is—or was—Val Roman. As a traveling showman I was a first rate vagabond. To float as aimlessly as a cloud had become my gay, carefree way of living ever since the war had left me stranded in the lands beyond the Suez. And so, on this hot August morning, when I came upon this little old Hindu in need of help, his troubles became the most important thing in the world to me, for the moment, and I lent a hand.

Not as if this were some good and noble deed that would bring me a rich reward some day—such a thought never entered my head. I simply said to myself, "There's a wizened little Hindu who needs a good Samaritan. Maybe an American Samaritan would do—an Irish-Italian-American-Samaritan—that's me."

To me, the unfortunate bossy, mired belly-deep in the mud, was just a tough old bundle of unground hamburger. To the Hindu it was not simply a cow, but a *sacred* cow, for that was the way his people believed. I improvised a collar around the neck of my sturdy little donkey, hitched a rope to it, and threw a loop around the cow's horns.

"Heave, ho!" I yelled, and together we went to work. My trained monkeys clapped their hands as the sluggish bovine came kicking and splashing out of the mire.

That's about all there was to it—a very trifling incident. I gathered up my rope, washed my hands at the pool, and prepared to go on. But something in the little old Hindu's character—his deep, mystical religious ardor—fascinated me. With face to the ground, he

mumbled his strange prayers.

"May his life transcend the fates!"

Those were his words, repeated over and over, as I interpreted them from the Hindu. *He was praying for me.*

"When his enemies cut him down, may he spring up from the earth to confuse them!"

The absurdity of it! How could an easy-going drifter like me ever have any enemies?

Wonder, my donkey, pricked up his ears as these weird Hindu incantations grew louder and more fervent.

"Get along, Wonder!" I slapped the beast on his dusty rump, the trained monkeys climbed aboard, and we ambled on. And I muttered aloud, "Enemies, huh! No enemies are going to cut Val Roman down. I go my own way and tend to my own business. . . . Get along, Wonder!"

BUT I had forgotten that tragic run-in with the band of Afghan bandits coming down from Kabul several months before. The mountains toward the Kyber Pass and beyond are known to be thick with murderous native warriors. To get past them safely is a matter of knowing when and how to travel. Not to take refuge in a caravanserai at night is to invite robbery and murder. And yet, knowing these things, one may nevertheless be taken by surprise by some bold and highly organized band.

And if such bandits are far famed for their treacherous crimes, as were the "Scarlet Swordsmen" of the Kyber Pass region, they may be forced, for their own survival, to cut a clean swath of death every time they strike. *I had miraculously escaped that swath of death.*

Yes, I had been the one lucky person among a party of twenty-five wayfarers a few months before. The blood

of my two dozen companions had been sprayed over the rocks along the side of the road, where the Scarlet Swordsmen had succeeded in trapping them. And I, pursued by a trio of those fierce, black-whiskered Afghans on their swift horses, had barely dodged out of reach of their slicing swords. When they leaped down to follow me on foot, I was gone. I had ducked into a narrow crevice among the rocks, and there I waited, pistol in hand.

But they never found me. They passed so close that I could hear their hard breathing. And once I recognized a face—a face that I would never forget—the face of a stern, black-bearded Afghan whom I already knew as Alashee. I knew him because, not many hours before, he had pretended to make friends with me while I was purchasing my supplies in Kabul. I had been suspicious of him at the time, though I had not guessed that *he was the contact man for the Scarlet Swordsmen*. He had spoken perfect English.

The bandits never found me, and I alone among the ill-fated twenty-five was spared.

In these succeeding months, as I had traveled from one village to another, putting on my shows with my trained monkeys, I had contented myself that the Scarlet Swordsman affair was over—that I would never see Alashee or any of his blood-thirsty tribe again.

But I should have known that the little old Hindu, bending to the ground in prayer, foresaw trouble for me. Trouble, indeed, was destined to come my way that very afternoon at the next village.

But I, in my carefree innocence, ambled down the road chuckling to myself, "Enemies, huh? I don't have an enemy in all India. Not unless I count Faye Landreth's parents. They shun me on account of my monkeys. They're

so darned afraid we'll leave a couple of fleas on the dormat of the English Agency. But what do I care, as long as Faye likes me? Me and my monkeys. She says a few friendly fleas might cheer the agency up. . . . I wonder if I'll see her on this trip. . . . If she'd dare make the hundred mile drive across to this route. . . ."

CHAPTER II

The Face of Alashee, the Afghan

IT WAS a sultry afternoon in the village, but my trained monkeys didn't mind. They loved the smells of the market-place when the temperature was around 120 degrees and the streets were jammed with human beings and livestock.

"Here's a hite of hanana, Squinty. You, too, Sober," I said, after I had arranged the miniature stage on my donkey's back and chained a monkey to each end of it. "Now take your places for the tambourine dance. Already? Here we go."

A smart pair of monkeys like Squinty and Sober know they've got to put on an extra lively show on such hot, noisy days when the crowds are easily distracted. If some pink-turbaned mogul rides through in an ornamented palanquin, borne on the shoulders of two hawny servants, the crowds of the lower castes tend to turn and stare. Men of higher castes will how and palaver. And a two-monkey circus like mine may go begging.

At first I tried to ignore this palanquin with its important gentleman passenger—a keen-eyed man of India, light brown of skin, trim of mustache and beard, commanding in appearance. His two bearers stopped in the shade within twenty yards of the central stream of human traffic where I was

giving my show.

"That is the new merchant prince," I heard someone say. "His name is Ben Addis. He deals in jewels."

Ben Addis remained in his easy chair. The two muscular blacks who held him apparently did not feel the weight of the poles on their shoulders. His other two servants were of a light brown hue. One of them began fanning him; the other, his personal lieutenant, wearing a bright green turban and green pantaloons, served him a drink.

That was all I noticed, at first. The monkeys and I were working hard to keep the show going against all the competition.

I thumped my favorite rhythms on the musical drums, the monkeys danced alternately and took turns passing their tambourines for coins.

"Dance, Squinty!" I whispered. "It's a jewel merchant named Ben Addis. Maybe he'll take a fancy to you. . . . Dance, Sober-sides. Rattle your slats. He's looking this way, boys, and so are his servants. Right over the heads of all the—"

My hands suddenly stopped with one double clunk on the musical drums. That lieutenant—the big rough looking fellow in green—I had seen him before!

"Who—where—?"

I stood as if paralyzed, staring. The show almost went dead on my hands. Sober jumped to the nearest drum and began beating wildly, and Squinty went on dancing. But my blood froze from some deep-rooted hatred. Where had I seen that face before?

"Alashee!" I gasped. "The Scarlet Swordsman!"

ALTHOUGH he was twenty yards away and a sea of turbaned heads separated us, he turned at that instant and caught my searching look. His

eyes widened a trifle, his lips tightened. At once he turned his face away.

It was the fierce vigorous face of an Afghan bandit, bushy black brows, a thick bristling beard, desert-bronzed skin. Now as he turned his back to me I had the rash impulse to run for an officer.

"Not so fast, Val Roman," I said to myself. "This little set-up isn't so simple. Think twice before you leap."

True, one well placed word from me might send this dangerous man to his doom. The government would be only too happy to jail him, try him, and hang him, along with some thirty-nine other Scarlet Swordsman. But what was he doing here, three hundred miles from his bandit haunts? That question would be worth answering. At the moment I had him. Yet one false move on my part might cost me my advantage.

In this quick whirl of thoughts I had already foreseen the glory that Faye Landreth's parents would heap on me—if! If they could forget, for once, that I was a monkey trainer. If I could turn hero overnight.

But I was overlooking the most serious if. If I could get into action before that damned Afghan named Alashee stuck a knife in my back.

Now he was talking to Ben Addis. Did this merchant prince realize his hireling was a desperate criminal?

I went on with my show, beating out drum notes so energetically that Wonder (who possessed an excellent sense of rhythm for a donkey) turned to give me the curious eye. Coins were dribbling in, and Sober was playing his usual trick of hiding a few in his red overall pockets, then shaking his head at me to deny it.

Soon I saw that Alashee was threading his way through the crowd. Would he dare face me, knowing that I knew

there was a price on his head?

My right hand slid to my pocket that held an automatic pistol. My left hand beat the drums erratically.

As Squinty did a handspring, and took a deep bow, Alashee crowded forward and flipped a coin into the tambourine.

"Haven't I seen this monkey show before?" he said. He gave me no sign of recognition—only a cool deadpan gaze.

"I've only been on the road a few months," I said.

"I was speaking of the monkeys," said Alashee. "I don't remember you."

"I didn't have the monkeys at Kahul," I said.

"Kahul? I've never been to Kahul," he lied icily.

"I bought these pets after I lost my meager savings in the Kyber Pass." I drove these words home. But he dodged them.

"Your misfortunes do not interest me. My master, Ben Addis, has instructed me to make you an offer for your pets."

"They are not for sale," I said caustically. "They would never be at home among green turbans."

"I have other turbans, if they are temperamental."

"Much less do they like *scarlet*," I added.

FOR a split second Alashee's eyes flashed fire. Scarlet turbans were a badge of the Scarlet Swordsmen. My words were an accusation flung in his teeth. But Alashee was a brazen fellow.

"I do not know what you are talking about. Ben Addis would give the monkeys good care. He is able to pay you well."

"Tell him," I said, "that I might consider an exchange—one of my monkeys

for one of his servants—my choice, of course."

The Afgan paled and I thought he would unleash his anger, but he bowed slightly and said he would convey my message to Ben Addis. He returned to the palanquin, then, for an earnest consultation. But I doubted whether it concerned my monkeys. So far as I could tell, Ben Addis took no notice of me.

The party soon moved along with the crowd, and within a few minutes it was out of my sight. Then the danger of my situation began to oppress me.

Did you ever have the midnight creeps in the middle of a hot afternoon? Have haunted-house terrors ever descended on you when you were in the midst of a thousand people in broad daylight? My monkeys must have thought I was a poor trouper during the uncertain half hour that followed. Every flash of metal I saw, I took for a knife or a gun.

I wanted an officer. That was all I needed—one competent officer of the law, to put the kibosh on Alashee before he could sneak around and deal me a surprise kayo. But among the flowing crowds no officer appeared.

Finally, in desperation, I called an honest looking stranger out of the crowd and gave him some money to watch my animals while I went off on an errand. Then I chased through the pedestrian traffic jams looking for someone with a uniform. Someone directed me to the headquarters of the village marshal. The place was a shaded one-story stone hovel at the last turn of the street. And what should I see in front of it but the familiar palanquin. Ben Addis and Alashee were idling in the shade and the uniformed marshal was drinking with them. I beat a quick retreat to the marketplace and put on another show with my monkeys.

I was puzzled. Was it possible that Alashee didn't remember me after all? Or if he remembered me at Kabul, was it possible that he didn't know I was the one escapee from that orgy of murder? Apparently I would be safe in taking my sweet time in setting the authorities on him.

By sunset, for reasons of good business, my monkeys and I were on our way toward the next village, seven miles beyond Ruklah. Two miles along the dusty highway I saw something that made my heart leap. An automobile was approaching—a red sport coupe.

Sure enough, it was Faye Landreth driving out to meet me.

CHAPTER III

Faye Witnesses a Tragedy

FAYE parked her car at the side of the road and came running out to give us all a vivacious greeting. That is, she hugged each of the monkeys and she hugged Wonder. As for me, well, she was somewhat more reserved. She shook my hands, which left me a trifle jealous of my dumb beasts. But I'll swear the glow in her eyes ran a close second to the sunset.

"What a cozy little caravan, Val. A one-mule circus all loaded up on Wonder's back. But shouldn't you have a calliope?"

"I'll buy one the day you join us," I said.

Faye laughed. "I'd love it!" She sang a few calliope notes. "But what would my parents say after all these years they've given me piano lessons—and I turn to the calliope?"

In all India there was no one quite like Faye Landreth. Any of the poetic allusions you've read about flowers blooming in the desert would be too tame to apply to her. She was a blonde

bombshell. On this particular evening, dressed in a crisp white palm beach sport suit, wearing a rose that matched her fingernails and her smiling lips, she was lovely in a way that made your head swim.

She talked at a pace that made my jabbering monkeys fall silent with awe. And right away she had me talking double time too, telling her all about my adventure of recent weeks. I guess one of the secrets of her lively conversation was that she was always interested enough in you to ask you some lively questions.

We climbed in the car and cruised along at snail pace, so that Wonder, cooperative beast that he was, could amble alongside with his two passengers.

Before I knew it I was telling all about the exciting events of this day—the sacred cow, the Hindu's prayers, the forecast of enemies, and then the ominous meeting with Alashee.

Her pretty face clouded with worry. "Then you haven't succeeded in reporting him to any officer?" she asked.

"No. Maybe I can find someone in the next village who isn't so friendly with Alashee's master."

"We'll wire father as soon as we get to the village," said Faye. "He'll be able to set the right men on Alashee's trail, and your headache will be over. That Afghan must be a bold one, coming out into the open this way. You're sure it's the same man?"

"Dead certain. You don't mistake a face like that." I proceeded to describe him in every possible detail—dress, manners, crisp English speech, bristling whiskers, cold cruel eyes. Then I sketched a rough picture of his face on the edge of a road map.

"But sooner or later he'll lead the way to the whole bandit gang," I said confidently. "And when that hap-

pens—"

"You'll be a hero," said Faye, patting me playfully on the shoulder, "and all the little schoolboys that read about you will want to buy pet monkeys and travel around India with a donkey—and capture bandits."

Then we faced each other, and our optimistic words were forgotten. She was shaking her head slowly.

"You're in trouble," she said. "Deep trouble. I'm like that old Hindu. I could feel it coming. That's why I coaxed father to let me drive over to this route to meet you. He really didn't approve, but he finally consented."

WE STOPPED to give Wonder a chance to get ahead. Our silence was a bit oppressive. The peril gathering over me was beginning to weigh. I tried to ignore it.

"The sun is down," I said. "Your father would hardly approve of your driving along the route at this time of evening."

"At least I have a car. How safe do you think you'd be, Val, walking this road—especially tonight? Still, it wouldn't have been wise to stay in Ruklah."

"I wasn't afraid," I said. "I pushed on for business reasons," I explained. "Someone advised me that they're holding a fair in this next village, and the spending is good."

"I didn't see any fair when I came through." The worry was deep in Faye's eyes. "Who told you there was a fair?"

"Some stranger—a quiet little brown-skinned man, with a twisted face. He wanted to be friendly."

Faye gave me one of those looks as if to say, "You've been taken in, my friend."

I wondered. Could that tip have been a ruse?

We were cruising slowly. Until now

I had taken little notice of the traffic, an occasional lone traveler on a camel, or a few horsemen coming in from the branch roads. The village was half a mile ahead, its low buildings black against the twilight sky. We were passing a few old deserted sheds that flanked the highway, open structures that had probably served as storehouses during the war. Wonder with his two passengers was having trouble keeping up, and we stopped to wait.

Then Faye, looking back, exclaimed, "Where's the other monkey?"

Squinty was gone—no, he was *going*! Somehow he had come loose from his chain and he was skipping gingerly away from the road toward one of the buildings.

"Squinty, come back!" This was highly irregular. Squinty gave one backward glance, hesitated for a moment, then deliberately disobeyed. He kept on going.

I bounded out of the car like an agitated mother in pursuit of a runaway child.

"Come back, Squinty."

I was only half aware that Faye was echoing the same call to me. "Come back, Val!" But I had to recover Squinty, who, for some strange reason, was unhesitatingly bound for the open door of the nearest low-roofed vacant building.

I almost overtook my runaway in the shadows of the doorway. But there someone tripped me and I fell forward. As I fell I heard Faye's scream of terror.

Also as I fell I caught the dim glint of a jewelled scabbard against a pair of dark green pantaloons. Then I struck the floor, face down, and a blade plunged into my back. It plunged deep. My arm twitched. I gave a choking cry. I tried to turn over, but a world of final blackness swept in on me.

CHAPTER IV

Wandering Murderer

IT WAS a strange feeling that no words can describe. The sort of paralysis you've experienced in nightmares, trying to walk or run on legs that simply will not obey you—that's the merest suggestion of the stunned, helpless feeling that held over me as I emerged into consciousness.

Who was I? Where was I? What was this awful heaviness of my right arm? I passed the fingers of my left hand slowly along the length of my right arm. The right hand was quite empty. But it was tense, like a spring of steel, like something that has just struck a terrific blow.

Dimly I heard the echoes of a girl's scream from somewhere in the distance. Did I know that voice? Where were those hoof beats coming from? I was standing in the doorway of a deserted building. *Why?*

I was looking down at the figure of a man lying in the doorway. He looked like *me*. Something was sticking up from his back—a dagger! A dagger doesn't belong in a man's body. I drew it out. I wiped the blood on the man's shirt until the blade gleamed.

I weighed the knife in my hand. It was a jeweled knife. It matched the jeweled scabbard I was wearing at the waist of my green pantaloons. This was all so strange—and yet in some degree familiar.

Now the hoofbeats were accompanied by the sounds of an automobile roaring in action. I looked out to the highway. Three men on Arabian horses were trying to overtake the car. They raced along beside it and one of them leaped to the runningboard. The car swerved and screeched to a stop.

My impulse was to reach for an auto-

matic pistol. But I had no pistol. Such a false impulse only added to my dreadful confusion. I thought I always carried my automatic.

The car again leaped into action. Two horsemen pursued, and a moment later the third trailed after. Soon the sounds faded out of hearing as the chase lost itself in the outskirts of the village.

From inside the doorway came the rustling noises of an animal pawing. I looked back. Brushing the clothes of the man who lay there, face down, was a bright-eyed monkey dressed in overalls! This was certainly familiar. And out there beside the highway, silhouetted against the sky, was a similar creature sitting on the back of a donkey.

I sat down in the doorway to think matters over. I was greatly disturbed by the clothes I was wearing. This jeweled scabbard was not mine. And this jeweled dagger—I must return it to the owner.

I rubbed my face thoughtfully, and such whiskers! Had I forgotten to shave recently? These bushy eyebrows—this turban! *These were not mine!*

For a long time, perhaps half an hour, or more, I sat there in a stupor. It was quite dark when the girl drove back in the car and shone the lights in at the doorway.

I cannot say why I crept away when I saw her coming. My feet seemed to take me away.

I heard her call, "Val! Val!" over and over. That seemed to be my name.

But I didn't answer. My head was aching so from all these strange thoughts. My body felt so unnatural. My arm, so steel-like, was somehow related to that cold, wicked feeling in my heart.

It hurt me to hear her low sobbing as she looked down upon the body lying there—the body *that had been mine*.

Before leaving, she took the automatic pistol from his pocket.

She spoke softly to the two monkeys. They must come with her. I heard her tell the donkey that from now on it must look after itself.

SHE was about to return to her car when her pursuers came galloping back and they rushed in and seized her. They bound her wrists, they tossed her on one of their Arabian mounts and together the four of them rode away.

Then it was that I tried to make up my mind between two or three courses of action.

Should I stay here beside that fallen, stahhed image of myself which seemed to be lying dead?

Should I drive away in the car that had been left with lights burning, just outside the door?

Or should I follow these indefinable impulses and move from this place wherever my feet wanted to go?

The desires of my feet carried me off to the east. Near another shed I heard the friendly whinny of a horse. As I rounded the building I could see it by the starlight, a beautiful Arabian mount.

I cannot say why I rode away, except that my body carried me into these actions from some mysterious will of its own.

I rode toward Ruklah. That was the way the horse seemed inclined to go. But within a mile of the town it wanted to stop and graze. I stayed on its back. I was thinking of that dead man that had seemed to be me. It was all very confusing.

"If that dead man was Val Roman, then who am I?"

I kept mumbling these questions to myself and out of the confusion the words of the old Hindu with the sacred cow came back to me:

"May his life transcend the fates . . . When his enemies cut him down, may he spring up from the earth to confuse them!"

What had they done with that lovely blonde girl? That was Faye! I was beginning to remember. But why did they want her? Where would they take her? How could I help?

Sometimes after midnight three horsemen came out and gathered round me.

"Come on in. Ben Addis is waiting for your report," one of them yelled. "What's the idea of stalling?"

They rode beside me. I didn't know these men. But they seemed to know me.

We rode to the foothills that separated us from the village of Ruklah. By starlight we found the entrance of a long black tunnel. One of the men lighted a torch and we rode through.

At the farther end a native servant took our horses. He looked up at me with a curious light of hero worship, and, speaking in his native tongue, said, "Another achievement. I wish I might win favors from Ben Addis as you do. The new scabbard he gave you is a beauty."

I nodded, thinking to myself, "So this scabbard is a gift of the merchant prince. Now who am I to be receiving gifts from him?"

OUT of the cave, into an old rambling stone house at the hillside edge of Ruklah, I soon realized that I was now in the dwelling place of Ben Addis.

One of the black servants, coming down the hallway, said, "The master is in your room waiting to talk with you."

He made a gesture toward a doorway — "my room." I went in. Ben Addis was lying on the couch. I saw at a glance that he was crippled. His legs and ankles, exposed beneath the folds

CHAPTER V

Lost—One Blonde Captive

of his lavender robe, were withered. This brought back my memory of his having remained in the seat of his palanquin at the market when I had seen him before . . . The market . . . my monkeys . . . the face of Alashee with his tiger-fierce eyes and bristling whiskers. Rapidly my thoughts were reassembling.

Ben Addis gave an expression of relief to see me and motioned me to the chair in the corner. Like the other men, he was mistaking me for someone I was not. All right, I would let him make his own mistakes. Far be it from me to tell him I was really Val Roman.

"What kept you so long?" he said.

"Is it so late?" I said.

"It's nearly two A. M. Where did you go after you did the deed?"

"The deed?"

"The murder."

"Oh—the murder, of course. Why—er—I mounted my horse—"

"Naturally."

"And rode."

"Rode where?"

"Nowhere. That is—just wherever the horse wanted to take me. I needed to rest awhile."

"Alashee, you're behaving very strangely. But you did succeed in killing him?"

Alashee! Was he calling me Alashee? Was he accusing me of *murdering myself*?

I groped for words. "It was a bloody mess . . . I'm afraid I . . . I splashed myself."

I glanced at my garments, then I reached for the hand mirror on the box-dresser in the corner—for my real purpose was to get a look at my face.

Ben Addis raised up from the cot. "What are you staring at yourself for?"

Sure enough, I was *Alashee*. I would know that face anywhere.

IT WAS a most uncomfortable situation. Val Roman had been murdered. My daggered body lay in a deserted doorway near the next village. But here I was, very much alive, wearing *the body of my murderer, Alashee*.

The servants came to serve an early breakfast to Ben Addis and four of his henchmen—myself included.

Ben Addis kept questioning me for details. When I hesitated for words, one of the other members of the murder brigade filled in with the necessary information.

Mobovarah, the little brown Hindu with the brown twisted face—the same servant who had advised me to go on to the next city with my monkeys—now related the high points of the night's escapade.

Mobovarah said, "Our plan was perfect, only we didn't know that this girl would drive up in her flivver."

"Which girl?" Ben Addis growled.

"She's the daughter of Morrison Landreth, an English agent."

"Ye gods!" Ben Addis' helpless feet gave a slight quiver.

"Our marked man rode in the car with her," Mobovarah went on. "But they drove slow on account of his menagerie following along. The four of us on horseback took the mountain shortcut like you told us. So we got there in plenty of time."

"Naturally," said Ben Addis. "Go on."

"Well, Alashee had a bright idea for getting Val Roman away from the girl's car so he could plunge the knife. I rode into the highway from a side trail and unleashed one of the monkeys when the car was a stone's throw ahead—then when they approached the vacant

building where Alasbee was hiding, he tempted the monkey with some banana. Didn't you, Alashee?"

"Yes," I said.

"Then the next thing you know, Roman came bounding out of the car to recover his runaway—"

"Ingenious, Alashee!" Ben Addis exclaimed, looking at me with admiring eyes. "Then what?"

"I—well, it was simple from there on," I said.

THE narrator again took the story out of my hands. "Don't be so modest, Alashee. You know you had to be very clever to conceal yourself inside that door and attract the monkey without ever being seen by the couple in the car."

"Are you sure the girl didn't see me?" I asked. "I heard her scream."

Ben Addis looked sharply at Mobovarah. "What about that?"

"What if she did see?" said the spokesman. "We were all set to charge out as soon as the dagger plunged. We overtook her car—"

"You've got to kill her," said Ben Addis, "regardless of who she is. How many times must I tell you, we never let a witness live. Never! Never!"

"All we're waiting for is your orders," said Mobovarah with a hint of eagerness in his twisted face.

"Where is she?"

"Somewhere back in the hills."

"Don't be so indefinite," Ben Addis growled.

"Well, damn it, she's a whirlwind, that girl," Mobovarah said, looking to his two companions to back him up. "She got away from us on the chase around the cottage. But we kept in sight of her. She swung back to her dead boyfriend, and that's where we caught her."

"And bound her, I trust?"

"We *thought* we did. The blonde little she-devil, we were bringing her back to camp on horseback when she scrambled down and made a chase for the hills. But that was her mistake. She trapped herself."

"Well, where is she? *Where is she?*" Ben Addis' big dark fists were shaking.

"She ran into the Red Rock maze. She's there, and we've left two guards at the entrance, with flashlights. So she's our prisoner."

Ben Addis snarled. He mopped his forehead. "That's a pretty kettle of fish," he said. "We've got to get her out of there at once. She must meet an 'accidental' death before daybreak. Where's her car?"

"Near the Red Rock maze. We brought it up for safe keeping. The guards have an eye on it."

"All right," said Ben Addis. "Get her out of the Red Rock maze. Take her for a final joyride. There's an embankment on the east Ruklah road. Let her go over with the car."

"I'm telling you, she's a wildcat," one of the men repeated.

"Well, don't get your own necks broken. Make the whole thing look like she went to sleep driving. The English agency can't suspect a thing."

I spoke up cynically. "You think not—happening on the same night her friend is murdered?"

"She'll be found four miles above Ruklah. He's six miles below. They'll miss her tomorrow. But he may not be discovered for several days. Who'll miss him, anyhow?"

"The monkeys," I said.

"Ye gods. You'll have to get them out of the way somehow."

"Bring them here and I'll hide them," I said.

"That's no good," said Ben Addis, "not after you trying to buy them in the market yesterday. I don't trust

live monkeys any more than men. But we'll see about them later." Ben Addis looked at his watch. "Only an hour till daylight. You'll have to hurry."

Mobovarab hesitated. "There's a thousand hiding places in the Red Rock."

"Take ten men with you," said Ben Addis.

"I'll go," I volunteered. I tightened the belt that held my jeweled scabbard and dagger and followed the others.

IN THE tunnels eleven of us lighted our torches and mounted our Arabian horses. Soon we emerged on the other side, and rode along the black foothills under the stars. The terror of Faye's situation was bearing down on me. To all appearances, I was *Alashee*. Everyone around me took me to be the cool and competent lieutenant to Ben Addis. I was second in rank in this murderous Scarlet Swordsman gang—for such it evidently was. The scarlet turbans had been left with that part of the gang that had remained in the mountains around Kyber. But the real leader of the outfit had always been, and still was, no other than Ben Addis, the sly merchant of jewels.

A wild and reckless game they were playing, coming down to these highways and byways of commerce. They were like serpents, made bold by their successful treacheries in the wilderness, now slithering into the crossroad cities to feed fat on less suspecting prey.

"You are strangely silent, *Alashee*," said little Mobovarab, at once sarcastic and inquisitive.

"This is a cruel errand," I said. "You'd better leave it to me."

"I'm surprised," Mobovarab said. "You usually leave the dirty work to me."

I was interested to know this. In fact, I was picking up many hints re-

garding my character—my new self that I seemed doomed to be. My life, miraculously spared, might yet be useful, but no one dare know my secret. I must *seem* to be *Alashee* in every way possible.

As the little old Hindu with the sacred cow had predicted, "*May his life transcend the jates . . . when his enemies cut him down, may he spring up from the earth to confuse them!*"

How long would the Gods allow me to live in this dangerous and damned body? I could only wonder. But as long as this was my lot, I would fight my fight. My first responsibility was to Faye.

"Here we are," said Mobovarab.

By torchlight and flashlight I took in the steep canyon walls—an opening of not more than fifteen feet at the narrow entrance. We found the two Afghan guards on the job. We left our horses with one of them. The other, who was cocksure he knew which part of the maze Faye was hiding in, accompanied the party of us along the narrow path at the edge of the stream.

The men looked to me for leadership. They were surprised when I insisted that they take their orders from Mobovarab. I preferred to enter the maze alone.

"*Alashee* wants to find her by himself," I heard one of the men comment. "Maybe he does not hate women so much as he has led us to believe."

"Did I ever say I hated women?" I challenged.

IN THE light of torches I saw their expressions of surprise and derision, and one of them said, "Ho! Who is it that has called women Allah's curse upon the human race? Can the unchangeable *Alashee* have forgotten the times he refused to help with the slaughter of a caravan because of its

beautiful women?"

"So I refused. And what was my excuse?"

"That women were not deserving of death from an expert Scarlet Swordsman like you. You would not waste a stroke of the blade upon them. You would not even admit that there could be such a thing as beautiful women. And so you stayed in camp and helped Ben Addis count the stolen gems as we brought them in."

So that was the sort of fellow they expected me to be—too proud to waste the stroke of a sword unless my adversary was a fighting man. This discovery brought the perspiration to my forehead. Yours Truly, Val Roman, alias Alashee, was going to have a tough time pretending any such disdain for a certain blonde captive. There was nothing in the world that I wanted so much, just now, as to see her alive, unharmed, and free.

"I'll enter the maze alone," I repeated stubbornly. I exchanged my torch for a flashlight and shot the beam along the walls.

Where would Faye have gone, once she had foottraced into this natural prison?

The bed of the mountain stream widened for a few yards within the natural chamber of walls. Our voices echoed through the babble and hiss of the several little tributary streams that chased down through separate tunnels into this central chamber. The walls flared with brilliant red when our torches brushed close.

At Mobovarah's command, the men entered their assigned tunnels for a swift preliminary search of the labyrinth nearest the entrance. Some of these tunnels were marked with signs and arrows. But I knew that there were endless crevices and steep-walled channels among this tunnel world where

one might hide for days without being discovered.

I had not been here before; but Faye had. She had told me of coming here with a party from the English agency. So I knew that she had chosen this place for escape with full knowledge of what she was getting into.

Where would she go? Far into the interior? Or would she chance a hiding place near the entrance? She had not had any sort of light. But she had had a gun—mine.

MOBOVARAH came back to me. "Do you think it would do any good to call?"

"And warn her we're on the trail? Very good, Mobo. Very good. Ben Addis would praise you for your brilliance. Since when have you been interested in helping her escape?"

Mobovarah squirmed. His twisted face reminded me of a sullen weasel.

"You shall have the full pleasure of seeing her plunge over the cliff, Alashee," he said. "The honor will be all yours, and you'll have no comebacks at me."

"All right. All right." I hadn't intended stirring up any old quarrels. But evidently I had struck a sensitive nerve. Mobo started off, then turned back to glare at me.

"Wise men," he said, "know when they're in danger of overplaying their hands. I don't need to give you and Ben Addis any more hints that you'd better lay off me. I can stand just so much sarcasm."

"Am I addicted to sarcasm?" I asked blankly.

"You were the one that started all that monkey talk, telling Ben Addis to buy a pair of brothers for me."

"Forget it," I said. "Let's find that girl or we'll all be in trouble. Why don't you have the men station them-

selves in the darkness and wait? With daylight she'll creep toward the entrance to try to find a way out."

"Damn it, we can't wait till daylight," said Mobovarah.

"You're in command, Mobo," I repeated. "But if necessary we can wait till we starve her out—as long as the car tracks aren't traced to these parts. Go on, Mobo. Leave me to my own strategy."

"What strategy?"

"Never mind. It would probably sound like sarcasm to you."

He went back into the tunnels, and I walked out to the narrow canyon entrance. I called to the guard to bring my horse.

"Are you certain she's had no chance to get past you?" I asked.

"Not a chance."

"Good. Now where is her car?"

"A few yards west of the foothill trail, hidden among the thickets. I have the key."

"Good," I said. "I'll take it."

You see, I had the advantage of these other Scarlet Swordsmen. I knew Faye Landreth. One flashlight view of those red rock walls had assured me. Mobovarah and the others wouldn't have believed that any girl would attempt to climb over those rugged, almost perpendicular walls in the dark. But they didn't know Faye Landreth.

If there had been just a little more daylight I might have made it in time. Or if my beautiful brown and white Arabian horse had been more congenial to my purpose.

"Step along, pony, step along. It's ten to one she's already dashed away—but if she hasn't, you'll be a hero, pony. Step along. I don't know this trail, but you ought to."

It was no good, talking my brand of English to this smart Arabian horse. Animals have a keen sense of who is

their master and who isn't. This horse, accustomed to Alashee, seemed to know what the men didn't know—namely, that I was *not* Alashee—at least not the Alashee it was used to.

I found the foothill road. On the gallop, I headed down the line toward that dark patch of vegetation. Yes, here was a thicket. Careful, now. If the car was still there, then I'd bet my spurs and jeweled dagger that Faye Landreth was there too, trying to figure how to make the thing go without the benefit of a car key.

And yet I should have known that Faye was the sort of girl who would always carry an extra key.

Car lights flashed on within fifteen yards of me. The motor roared, and the dark red coupe leaped out of the thicket. It shot into the narrow road. It gave me and my horse a wide berth. It crackled over a line of low bushes, careened, straightened up, swung back into the road beyond me.

It was occupied by one blonde bombshell. She saw me, and she rolled up the window as I shouted at her.

"Faye! Faye! FAYE! Come back!"

CHAPTER VI

South Bound Bus

BY GEORGE, she heard me, and she gave me a look.

A few minutes before, it was the darkness that did me wrong. Now it was the light. If there hadn't been quite so much dawn in my face she might have stopped to see who it could be calling her by name.

But she got one square look at my whiskered face and tiger-fierce eyes, and that was enough. I saw the flash of terror and hatred in her expression. She bore down on the footfeed and turned the foothill trail into a serpent-

line of dust.

For one brief moment that look she gave left me stunned. I should have felt complimented. The terror was the very feeling she should have toward a person like Alashee. The hatred was for Alashee, of course, for what he had done to me. And yet I, wearing Alashee's body, was bound to be cut to the quick, catching the slap of that expression full in the face.

I reined my horse and cut back to the upper trail. Here was one of the short-cuts that Alashee and his men had taken on the previous night. My horse knew the way, and daylight was coming on swiftly.

"Move along! Move along!"

My words, practiced on my donkey, had no charm whatever on this fiery Arahian mount. But a light slap of the reins on the neck got results. I leaned forward from the stirrups, and the ground sped beneath me.

The serpent-line of dust was coming toward me, some twenty minutes later. Again I would have a fighting chance to make contact with one red coupe occupied by one blonde. I winced at the thought of having to take horrified expressions from her pretty face. I groped for words—the most believable words I could muster—to prove, in one breath, that I was a friend, not a terrorist.

Here my trail led down to the road. She swung through the nearest curve. She must have seen me, for she suddenly throttled down. The brakes tore up the earth.

But I would be at her window before she could turn around, and she knew it. So she came on. And then and there I knew I was going to do the daredevil stunt you've seen done a hundred times in the movie. I would gallop right into her path and leap from my horse to the car.

ANY errors in my calculations were food for thought *afterwards*. Error number one, the movie boys rehearse their acts beforehand. Error number two, the movie cars have open windows or other conveniences for outstretched hands to hang onto. Error number three, movie cars may be depended upon not to jam the brakes too soon. Number four, a movie horse knows better than to leap ten yards ahead of the car at the crucial moment. But as I had noted before, my Arahian mount was not responsive to my donkey talk.

I leaped. That's about all I can say for myself.

I leaped because, after I was all set to leap, my horse suddenly sidestepped and galloped out from under me. I flew forward, I was too surprised to go into a roll, I landed on my chest and the points of my toes.

The screech of brakes was the most welcome sound I ever heard. The car came to a stop within inches of me. I rolled in the dust and scrambled to the edge of the road.

"Get up! On your feet!"

Faye Landreth was giving me orders! The car window was down, now, and an automatic pistol was leveled at me over the door.

On my feet I marched.

I don't know what sort of sarcasm Alashee might have employed if I had been in possession of his mind as well as his body; but I will say that Faye would have put his talents to a test. For the next few miles she practically hurned me to a cinder—the more so because I couldn't make her listen to me. There were simply no words to penetrate the wall of hatred that she built against me.

"Listen to me, Faye. You're in terrible danger. You've got to believe me!"

"I'll be in danger when I relax my grip on this gun," she said. "March along. We'll make the village in an hour, at this pace, and they'll find a nice comfortable cell for you until they can string up a rope."

She drove as slowly as she had driven the night before when Wonder and the two monkeys had accompanied us. I walked.

"Faye, you've got to listen."

"Where did you get my name? Never mind, it's been in the papers. You're probably able to read. Many murderers learn to read. It's a convenience when their names are in the headlines."

"You think I'm Alashee, but I'm not," I said. "Alashee is dead. He died when he murdered me—and I lived. *I'm Val Roman.*"

CRACK! The pistol spat a bullet at my heels. I had been warned to keep a distance of five yards between myself and the front bumper. Perhaps I had lagged a matter of four or five feet. But no, it was something else that had earned that little har-binger of death—my mention of the name Val Roman!

"Don't speak that name again," Faye Landreth said, and she meant it. "From your ugly lips I won't stand for any such sacrilege. . . . So you *are* Alashee. That's what I suspected when you followed me on horseback."

"I had to see you—"

"Yes, I can understand that. For the same reason you had to kill Val Roman, you think you'll have to kill me—to save the ugly necks of all your Scarlet Swordsmen. Let me look at this map. Ah, here it is, a little sketch—"

"*I made that sketch!*" I shouted. "I can tell you what it is. And that will *prove*—"

"What is the sketch?"

"It's the face of Alashee," I said. I drew it—last night—before he got me—there! Don't you see? That proves—"

"It proves nothing," said Faye Landreth, gesturing with the pistol. "Keep moving. . . . It proves that whoever moved my car last night discovered this sketch and recognized it as you."

I fell silent. My blunt attack was doing me more harm than good.

"So you're one of Ben Addis' men," Faye said presently.

"Aren't you tired of driving with one hand?" I said. "I'll march for you without the encouragement of a pistol. I'm used to walking—with Wonder and Squinty and Sober."

"So you know their names?" Faye didn't like this. "Val would have been happy to know that. He'd have given you a jolly punch that would have curled your whiskers. . . . What will your master Ben Addis think when he reads the court reports and discovers that he has been associating with a Scarlet Swordsman?"

"He knows all about that—I'll swear to that in court." I tried to put this idea over with a vengeance, for now I thought I was getting somewhere. "Give me a chance in court and I'll burn Ben Addis' hide off. Believe me, Faye, something very strange happened when Alashee stabbed me last night—"

"You're no ordinary desperado. You're insane. You've got everything the newspapers will want for a big story with bold, black headlines. 'Afghan Bandit Claims To Be Victim of His Own Murder.' Yes, you've got everything—including big talk."

"I've got a way with monkeys," I said.

"No doubt. Do you prefer to choke them or stab them in the back?"

"Where are you going to go," I asked, "after you've turned me over to the village marshal?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I want to know whether you'll be safe from the men who intend to run your car off into the canyon." I waited for her response. I looked back at her, sensing that I had at last made an impression. She waited for me to say more. "If there was a chance for you to live I'd ask you to take care of Sober and Squinty."

"You're very clever at trying to weave your way into my confidence," she said presently. Her tone was a trifle less bold. "What do Sober and Squinty mean to you?"

"Why should I tell you, when you won't believe me?"

"I'm in no mood to believe any Scarlet Swordsman," she said bitterly. "After what you did last night—"

"Believe me, your friend is *not dead*—*not entirely!*"

"You're mad," said Faye. "But as soon as I've delivered you to the police, I'll accompany the coroner . . ."

THERE were tears in her eyes, but a fighting strength was in her voice. I knew she was thinking, with pity, of the body that had lain in the doorway since last night, unattended except for the presence of two bewildered little monkeys in red overalls and jaunty feathered hats.

I had made some sort of impression on her with my knowledge of Val Roman and my interest in the monkeys. How deep an impression it was hard to say.

Meanwhile I had been watching for my chance to break and run for freedom.

Now we were coming to the main highway. My chances for a getaway would be considerably lessened from

here on. Had it not been for her, I would have welcomed a cozy cell. But for all I knew, the band of Swordsmen might already be riding to overtake us. They would come the instant they realized that Faye, not I, had driven away in the car.

I kept my ears tuned to horses' hoofs. But as luck would have it, a very different turn of events came about. The red coupe ran out of gas and came to a choking stop at the side of the road.

When the coupe stopped, I didn't. I made the break for the scrubby underbrush toward the foothills, taking my chance against the shots from the pistol. Two bullets came close enough to my heels to give me the jack-rabbit jumps. A third bullet nipped my green turban. I fell on my face and lay on the ground long enough to catch my breath.

I squirmed about to see whether that little blonde desperado was following me.

To my surprise she was not. A bus was coming up the road. She hailed it. It stopped, and she got in and rode away.

"So she doesn't want me, after all!" I muttered. The situation left me flat on my back in more ways than one. "Now why did she do that?"

The answer was that she had believed me, in part, at least. She was in danger of being murdered by the other Swordsmen before she could deliver me to the authorities, and she knew it. Capturing me was not quite so important, on this bright and shining morning, as retaining her own life. In fact, nothing could be wiser than for her to report back to her father at the English Agency, a scant one hundred miles to the south.

I suspected the bus was southbound. I knew that the buses on this line were running in pairs, and that was my cue

—my chance to look out for the welfare of the blonde dynamite that had just taken three potshots at me.

Five minutes later I hailed the second bus, paid my fare, and asked the driver to stop on it. But he wasn't too optimistic about overtaking bus number one.

"I have to make all the local stops," he said. "We won't catch up till we hit the other highway, a hundred miles to the south."

"And the other bus goes straight through?"

"That's right."

"And there's an English Agency when we reach the town?"

"Indeed there is, right in the heart of Ricklasha, and you'll find a sturdy gentleman in Sir Morrison Landreth."

"Drive on, friend," I said. "And I'll have a pocketful of shillings for you if you make it ahead of the other bus."

CHAPTER VII

Morrison Landreth Turns a Deaf Ear

THE nightmares that haunted me on that one-hundred mile journey were something terrible, for I sank into a half-dead stupor soon after boarding the bus. It was Val Roman who did the dreaming, but it was the evil deeds of Alashee that terrorized my dreams.

The final nightmare came upon waking at the bus terminal at Ricklasha. The first bus had arrived just a few minutes ahead of us (in spite of my driver's breakneck efforts—for which I tipped him generously) but to my dismay the other bus did not contain a passenger by the name of Faye Landreth.

"Yes, I remember her," the bus driver said to me. "Sure, she got on between towns, and I would have brought her all the way. But some

men on Arabian horses raced us toward Ruklah and charged across the road. There was nothing for me to do but stop. A little fellow with a twisted face, a Hindu, was the one that coaxed her to get off."

"Coaxed her!" I mocked. "Threatened her with a gun or a knife, most likely."

"I wouldn't know," said the driver. "She went without a word."

"Hell, man, have you come all the way into Ricklasha without stopping to report this business?"

"I'll make my own reports as I'm required to make 'em and no other way," said the driver.

So I was stranded a hundred miles from Ben Addis' camp, and Faye had fallen into the bandit's hands. At the rear of the bus terminal depot a radio was blaring the news, and I listened with trepidation. . . . The European situation. . . . Salt imports. . . . The American congress . . . the local fairs of India villages. . . . But no reports of any banditry or murders in the vicinity of Ruklah, and no automobile accidents. Well, these were pretty sure to come in time.

In fact, at any hour or minute, the story of Val Roman's murder might hit the front pages, and the newspapers would soon piece together a description of me as a suspect. When that happened, my life wouldn't be worth more than the price of a bullet. Any further traveling I needed to do had best be done quickly.

One place I would be safe: in the camp of Ben Addis—until the lid blew off the whole band of Scarlet Swords-men!

I glanced at the bus schedules. An hour and a half to kill. To kill! The very words conjured up the horrified association of an automobile plunging over a cliff.

AS I approached the grounds of the English agency, I was stopped by the shout of a young man in distress.

"Lend a hand, there, stout fellow!"

He pointed to the tennis ball that he had just struck out of bounds. If I hadn't been the sort of person who would help a cow out of the ditch, I might have passed William Oleander without noticing him. But as quick as we had exchanged a couple of words and he told me that he had just come from England to see Faye Landreth, I took very particular notice of him.

He was about my age—that is, Val Roman's age—an exceptionally well-built fellow with a harmless face, large clear eyes, rather prominent nose and jaw, and a mop of dark brown hair. His muscles worked well on a tennis racket.

"So you're practicing to win a game or two from Faye Landreth," I said.

"Oh, I'll beat her, all right. I'm a sort of all round champion when it comes to 'love one.' The old technique, if you know what I mean. This is my big chance. Two weeks of tennis to put her in the right frame of mind for a proposal."

He nudged me as if to imply that it was all over but the congratulations.

"You're pretty sure of yourself," I said. "Maybe she has a boy friend over here."

"Maybe that's the reason her folks sent for me. I'm an old friend of the family. Confidentially, her old man cabled me the money to fly down for a visit. She'll swoon when she sees me again, I'll bet."

"Why are you confiding this to me?"

"Aren't you the gardener or something? How soon do you think Faye will be back? Her father didn't seem to know."

"She may not be back at all," I said.

William Oleander caught the tension

in my voice. His slightly giddy manner suffered a chill.

"What do you mean, she may not—"

"She was kidnapped off a bus near Ruklah about two hours ago. I found out from the bus driver, putting two and two together. So far as I know, it hasn't been reported to anybody. That's why I—"

"Did you say *kidnapped*?"

"The bus driver was a dumb-bell. The kidnapper was clever enough to get away with his goods without the passengers realizing—"

"Kidnapped! But why? I don't understand—"

"You go back and play tennis, laddie," I said. "I'm on the way to tell her father."

"Two of us!" He tossed his racket to the verandah hammock and was off with a bound. I followed.

A lucky break at last, I thought. Bill Oleander could crash the sanctum of Sir Morrison Landreth's domicile much easier than I. For he was, in every detail of appearance, manners, and speech, an English agent's idea of what a vivacious blonde daughter deserved. Moreover, he wasn't encumbered with any pet monkeys.

WITHIN ten minutes, the three of us were flying to Ruklah in a small monoplane—Sir Morrison Landreth, Bill Oleander, and I. The pilot made a bee line for Ruklah.

On the way, what little prestige I had gained with Bill Oleander slipped away from me. Bill, not used to the castes of India, had been ready to accept me as a friend. But Faye's stern, thin-faced father eyed me skeptically through his monocle. His pointed mustaches twitched with disdain. He saw me as a stranger, an Afghan with tiger-fierce eyes—not a person to be trusted. My hint of an invasion of

Scarlet Swordsmen left him cold. He was disturbed about his daughter, all right, but her turned a deaf ear to my allusions to a wider danger.

"How do you happen to be concerned about my daughter?"

When Morrison Landreth froze me with this question I should have known it was a mistake to try to confide anything.

"I feel a concern for any innocent person who is in peril," I said.

"Faye is always getting herself into scrapes. You're probably leading us on a wild goose chase." He turned to Bill. "You'd just as well know these things before you marry her, my boy. She's adventurous. I'll declare I could spend half my time keeping her out of jams. But ten times out of ten she doesn't need my help."

Bill didn't have any comment.

I said, a bit sarcastically, "Bill will teach her to play tennis. That will solve everything."

"I resent that remark." Bill flared into a temper.

Mr. Landreth went on with his acid worrying. "I'm a good father. But she tries my patience. You never know but what she may drive that car of hers away out in the desert to pay a visit to some fool monkey trainer—not that she would ever fall for any such low-bred person—"

"What's wrong with a monkey trainer?" I cut in savagely.

Both Landreth and Oleander gave me the cold stare. It was the young blood who spoke:

"Who are you? What's Faye Landreth to you?"

"Maybe I'm her best friend," I said.

"She doesn't associate with you Afghanistans," said Sir Morrison Landreth.

"Very well," I said. "But you can't stop me from thinking. If I were a

member of your race and religion, who knows? I might be the very man she'd want to marry."

"Why, you?" Bill Oleander's bad temper made away with him. He turned in his seat and swung at me with his open hand. The slap grazed my whiskered face. I smiled, daring him silently. Then my smile faded and we glared at each other hatefully. Sir Morrison Landreth's eye shifted to the dagger at my side. He gave Bill a restraining pat on the shoulder.

"Careful, Oleander. Careful. We don't know this man."

THE pilot of the plane snapped an order. We were about to land at Ruklah. We'd better cut the rough stuff and belt ourselves in our seats.

I was smiling to myself. This fierce face I wore was a most deceiving mask. I had not the slightest intention of coming to blows with Bill Oleander. But I had to add one jealous thrust to our verbal clash.

"Take a tip or two, Bill. When you marry Faye you'll do well to buy her a pair of pet monkeys. You can train them to play tennis. And she'll enjoy them for company."

"Tend to your own business."

"And another thing: that temper of yours may cost you, if you don't learn to control it." This was rash talk, but I was in a caustic humor. All the good will of my Val Roman nature had been fouled.

The plane landed at the eastern edge of the village. A few officials and curious townsmen and a gang of wide-eyed children came trailing out to meet us. They were full of questions. For what reason would a special plane be landing at Ruklah in the middle of an otherwise peaceful day?

A two-wheeled carriage was provided for Landreth and Bill. There would

have been room for me, too, but they had had about enough of my company. However, I followed along with the crowd, making myself as inconspicuous as possible, but getting in on all the talk.

Sir Morrison Landreth preferred to ask his own questions. Had his daughter been seen? Where was her car? Didn't anyone here know her? What was this rumor about a band of Scarlet Swordsmen lurking in this neighborhood?

You never saw such a lot of blank faces. From the village marshal down to the open-mouthed urchins of the lower castes, no one knew of any skulduggery.

Landreth threw a scornful look back at me and turned to Bill Oleander. "I told you this would be a wild goose chase." Then to the city marshal, "I suppose you'll say there isn't even such a man as Ben Addis living here."

"Ben Addis! He is one of our most prominent citizens," said the marshal. All the onlookers added their enthusiastic comments: Yes, Ben Addis was the new merchant prince who was bringing all the trade into the village. He was a man to be respected. He was a cripple who rode in a fine palanquin. He was planning a fair for the display of India's finest gems. Dealers would come from far and wide.

"Then he isn't a kidnapper or a Scarlet Swordsman?" Landreth asked.

This brought a storm of laughter. A Scarlet Swordsman! A kidnapper! Ridiculous. Where did the English agent ever get such a mistaken idea?

LANDRETH turned his accusing glare on me. There was anger in the twitch of his pointed mustaches. He tapped his monocle against his hand.

The marshal saw me, then, and he

erupted with a surprise greeting.

"Well, well! Here is the man we need. Here, your honor, this man can tell you all about Ben Addis. This is Alashee, the personal attendant of the merchant prince."

"Impossible!" said Landreth. "He is the one who warned me—"

"Don't argue with the marshal," I cut in. "*I am the lieutenant of Ben Addis.*"

"Ugh? Hey," The proud Landreth had probably never been so confused in his life.

"Forget about me," I added hastily. "You came here in search of your daughter."

"He's crazy . . . crazy!" Landreth muttered half under his breath.

The market place was just ahead of the avenue of trees through which we were walking. From the clamor it was evident that some exciting news had just struck the town. A party of tradesmen, just arrived by camel, were gathering a crowd.

At once a native came running down toward us, calling at the top of his voice. He wanted the marshal. Something dreadful had happened.

"They've found a murdered man!" he cried. "It was the man with the monkey circus. Someone had stabbed him in the back."

Bill Oleander, Sir Morrison, the marshal, and the whole crowd around them, caught breathless by this news, hurried forward to get in on all the particulars. I wasn't so interested, owing to the fact that I had been present at the murder, on both the giving and receiving ends. It was my chance to fall back; for now, if ever, the trap was closing around me.

"Get out of this," I said to myself. "There's nothing more to be done for Faye's father. You gave him all the information he would take. It's time to save your own hide."

So I dropped back of the crowd and looked for an easy escape. It was there, and a more convenient set-up I couldn't have asked for. Three Scarlet Swordsmen on horseback were riding along just beyond the bank of trees, keeping an eye on me. You see, they had been on the lookout for me ever since my horse strayed back to camp. They weren't going to let an old-time lieutenant like me fall into the wrong hands.

A moment later I was riding back with them, around the hills and into the tunnel that led to the rear of Ben Addis' headquarters.

CHAPTER VIII

The Beheading Knife

"BEN ADDIS is waiting for you in his room," Mobovarah said to me. "Here is the beheading knife. I've taken care of removing the rust. You'll find it as sharp as a razor."

"Very kind of you. Where is the victim?"

"In the cell on the left. I'll send her in when you're ready."

Mobovarah watched me closely as I weighed the long tool in my hands.

"Anything wrong?" he asked. "It weighs not one ounce more nor less than when you constructed it."

"It's all right," I said.

The handle-end was of some tough, light-weight wood. Toward the blade-end it was weighed with metal to give added impact to the stroke. The four-foot handle offered tremendous leverage. It was as gruesome a death-dealer as I ever hope to see. The blade was curved like a sickle, a three-inch width of fine steel, tapering to a point.

"It's all right," I repeated. "What happened to our plan to send her over the embankment?"

"Complications and delays," said Mobo, sauntering down the hall with me. "In the first place, none of us wanted to cheat you out of the pleasure you asked for. So, after we saw you boarding the bus and we succeeded in rescuing her, I insisted to Ben Addis that we wait for your return—so there'd be no taunts or complaints from you."

I took it that he meant the blame should fall on me for our failure to carry out the original plan. Certainly I had earned it.

"Go on," I said coldly.

"In the second place," Mobovarah gave me the suspicious eye, "you were gone for three hours or more, no one knows where. You know Ben Addis. If he feels the slightest suspicion toward any one of his men, he immediately puts that man to a test. I suspect he'll be more than pleased to see you perform this little execution before his eyes."

"Thank you, Mobo," I said. "Remind me not to be sarcastic with you this week."

Alone I entered the room of Ben Addis—the jungle lounge, as he called it, with the matted floors and the bamboo walls.

Ben Addis lay on the cot, his shriveled legs covered by the blue robe. Strangely, I wondered for the first time whether he was able to walk, and whether he did not make the most of his crippled condition. He was a master at giving orders and demanding all the personal attentions that any completely helpless person might crave.

He looked up at me slowly. He was, to all appearances, the master of himself and of me. I stood at attention. My hands trembled on the handle of the beheading knife.

"Are you quite ready?" he said quietly.

"No. I think you're making a mistake."

He lurched forward, struck speechless by my unprecedented defiance. He breathed cold fury for a moment, studying me out of his keen dark eyes. He settled back on one elbow.

"A soft streak in you, Alashee? I had begun to suspect it."

"She'll be worth more alive than dead, Ben Addis. Let's talk it over."

"You couldn't talk fast enough to break the policy that has put us where we are today, my dear Alashee. The most successful rule in our business is to let no witnesses live. Hear that clamor out in the streets? They've found the body of the monkey trainer. Soon they'll knock at our door to ask what we know."

"What do we know?"

"Nothing—as long as there's no danger of that screeching blonde doing us in. But if they caught one wail of her voice—"

He broke off abruptly, for Faye Landreth herself was entering. Mobovarrah had been impatient to get his part of the performance over with. He closed the door on the three of us.

FAYE was as white as chalk. Her lips betrayed the awful tension of trying to control her fright. Her glance took in the beheading knife with its four-foot handle. She looked from Ben Addis to me. It struck me with horror that she was not in the least surprised that I should be the person holding the knife.

Overcoming a choked throat, she spoke to me, "I should have known *you'd* catch up with me. But I *am* surprised to realize that the great Ben Addis stoops to this sort of sport."

"I have thrived on this sport," said Ben Addis. "Step this way, please."

She obeyed. She stood in the center of a thick brown mat. It was a wide floor. There were no objects of furni-

ture between Ben Addis' cot and the bamboo walls.

The master scowled at me. "You usually begin by swinging the knife for a warm-up."

I stood as motionless as Wonder, my donkey, might have done in his most stubborn mood.

"Alashee!" Ben Addis snarled.

"I'm not going to do it," I said.

"You double-dyed traitor, you've gone soft."

"I'm no traitor to my own principles, Ben Addis." I could snarl, too. "I'll have you know I haven't changed one bit since the days when I trained monkeys!"

"Alashee! Have you lost your mind?"

"I'm not Alashee. I'm Val Roman. I can't kill this girl. I'm in love with her."

Ben Addis drew a pistol from under the blue robe. The black hollow of the barrel faced me.

"No man is of any use to me, Alashee, if he can't obey orders. I'll give you three counts. Slash her head clean from her body before I count three, or you're out . . . *One . . . Two . . . Three . . .*"

I lifted the knife on three. I crouched to swing. But not at Faye. My shoulders flexed for a swift stroke at the crippled man on the bed.

Crack! The pistol shot stopped me cold. The bullet leaped squarely through my heart, as if it had been aimed by an electric eye. A sickening sensation charged through me. The beheading knife slipped from my fingers. I had the sensation of falling with it . . . falling . . . falling. I crashed forward to the floor and to black, black realm of sudden death.

Death to the body of Alashee. . . . But in that very moment *I became Ben Addis!*

CHAPTER IX

Contortions of a Charmed Life

FOR a second time my charmed life had defied the fates.

I was lying on the cot, trembling a little. My withered legs beneath the robe were alive with the strange sensation of wanting to dance. To dance a weird dance of the cruelty and the power that Ben Addis wielded over his fellowmen.

The smoking pistol was in my hand. I was looking down through burning eyes, scowling with hard sullen lips, toward the dead man on the floor. That man was Alashee, Alashee the body, that had held the mind and the soul of Val Roman.

But now, thanks to the little old Hindu who had once prayed so devoutly for me, I had escaped the death that caught the heart of Alashee. My enemy, Ben Addis, had tried to cut me down.

And what had happened to *him*? I had taken possession of his temple of flesh. It was as if his very act of murder had hurled him out of his own body. *He had destroyed himself—and in his place I lived.*

Poor Faye! Poor terrified child! She was looking down at the dead form on the floor, on the very mat where she had been commanded to stand for her execution. And there was compassion in her face for Alashee!

Once she had despised the very ground upon which he walked. But in these last few moments she had been compelled to see him (that is, *me*) in a new light.

"He would have saved my life." She spoke slowly, she did not look up. "But why? Why?"

"Because he loved you."

Those were my first words in the

voice of Ben Addis. Personally, I didn't like the voice. It belonged with words of cunning. I tried again, striving for a ring of sincerity:

"Because he loved you."

She raised her head to stare at me.

"You killed him—because he refused to kill me." Her words were as cold as steel. "It is so easy for you to kill, isn't it? He had been your personal servant for years. . . . And you—"

"Don't misjudge me as you at first misjudged him," I said. How could I tell her? How could I escape the full impact of her bitterest hatreds. There was no question in her mind that I meant to have her murdered at once, now that I had disposed of her one defender.

Mobovarah had opened the door, and he and other servants stood in a huddle, gazing at the scene. Faye was again kneeling beside the fallen form, and she touched his brown cheek with her hand. Everything about this person had been beyond her understanding. I knew that she would think back to all his claims to a kinship with Val Roman, but she would find no answers to the contradictions and mysteries that surrounded him.

Mobovarah crowded ahead of the other servants. His face twisted with nervous anxiety to break the silence.

"You—you found it necessary to kill him?" he asked me. An expression of extreme pleasure lighted his face. "If it had to be done, master, I would gladly have accommodated."

"He was a champion swordsman," I heard one of the servants murmur reverently.

"He was a great lieutenant," I said, mustering the dignity and bearing that I thought Ben Addis might have displayed. "He had certain remarkable qualities of character that I will long

remember . . . BUT—there are moments that call for strict obedience. At such times, the servant who hesitates has outlived his usefulness. Do I make myself clear?"

There was a long moment of stubborn silence.

"Do I make myself clear?"

Mobovarah bowed. "Yes, master."

And the others, heads bowed, echoed his words. "Yes, master."

CHAPTER X

The English Agents Calls

IT WAS the most complex headache you could imagine. A headache in more ways than one. You'll recall that on my previous experience of this kind a painful stupor held over me, during which I could hardly realize that I had entered the body of Alashee.

Well, the torture was on me again. But with this difference. Now I knew what was happening. It was again the painful readjustment of fitting myself into the new body—a body that was contorted with the highly organized nerves of deceit, not readily adapted to the simple soul of Val Roman.

Consider my predicament. I was at once the most popular and respected citizen of Ruklah and the most hated criminal of the Kyber murder escapades. And yet, within these masks, I was Val Roman, the soft-hearted Irish-Italian-American good Samaritan, who wanted nothing more than to blow the lid off the whole Scarlet Swordsman crime wave.

My afternoon was as chaotic as a tornado. Like it or not, I was compelled to pick up Ben Addis' life where he had left off.

"The village marshal and a party of visitors are ascending the front steps, Ben Addis," one of my servants an-

nounced. "Shall I tell them you'll meet them on the verandah soon?"

"What are we to do with the body of Alashee?" another asked. "Is he to be buried with or without honors?"

And from another, "We have succeeded in capturing Val Roman's menagerie. Shall we dispatch the monkeys at once?"

There were other questions about the jewel business, about the coming commercial fair, there were problems of strategy from the other half of the bandit gang at work in the Kyber Pass. Apparently there was to be some high-powered cooperation between those bandits, working the highways, and our commercial plans for entertaining India's dealers in precious stones.

But most immediate of all, there was the problem that Mobovarah wanted to solve with one stroke of the beheading knife. Wasn't he entitled to the honor of executing Faye Landreth? And shouldn't the deed be done without another minute of delay?

"The townsmen are already waiting on the verandah to question you," he urged. "If they learn she is here, we're lost."

"You underestimate my powers of suhterfuge," I said. "Put that beheading knife on ice—I mean—"

"On ice?"

I covered the break over as best I could. American slang would not become the precise Ben Addis. But to Mobovarah I was taunting, as Alashee had done; and the way for him to escape sarcasms was for him to excel in performance of duties—as in volunteering to wield the beheading knife.

"Put the knife away," I repeated. And then, to Faye, "Come with me."

My withered legs carried me readily; in fact, there was a surprising sensation of eagerness to walk that filled my whole body. Mobovarah stared at me.

"Master, do you *mean* to do that? I thought it was our secret. . . . The servants in the hall will see you. . . . Master, are you going to walk in *their* presence?"

"Hush! I want to walk, so I'm going to walk."

MOBOVARAH nodded his agreement, but he was thoroughly disconcerted. I had guessed, by this time, that it had been Ben Addis' game deliberately not to walk, except in private, because his legs were twisted and unsightly. He gained in prestige by riding wherever he went and being waited upon at all times.

"Moho, why are you following me?"

"Can you handle the execution by yourself, master?"

"The execution is off. I am taking Miss Landreth to the verandah to join the conference with the townsmen. As for you, Mobo, I want you to make a few preparations for me, just in case of emergency. . . . The monkeys. . . . The Arabian horse that Alashee rode. . . .

I paused to whisper a few detailed orders to Mobovarah, which I knew he would obey to the letter. Then I conducted a very bewildered blonde toward the front door.

But not to the verandah proper. I spotted a narrow storage room under the front stairs. There, behind a closed door, she could watch through a little square purple-glass window and hear everything that was said.

"Listen carefully," I said. "And don't take any notions to run away."

Servants helped me to the verandah, then, and the two palanquin bearers placed me where I could face my guests, the most distinguished of whom was Sir Morrison Landreth. Not so many minutes ago this gentleman had rejected my intrusions in his affairs. But

now I was Ben Addis. It was amazing that he could accord such a show of respect to me.

The marshal was quick to allude to our sociable drinks of recent weeks, to establish himself in the eyes of the other townsmen as one of my special friends.

Bill Oleander was on nerve's edge, but he was wise enough to leave the talking to the others.

My servants brought refreshments at once. The marshal and Landreth looked to each other to start the fireworks, but I saved them the trouble.

"I know why you have come, gentlemen," I said. "You are seeking information pertaining to the murder of a monkey trainer named Val Roman. He was killed at sunset last evening."

"Yes, yes, how did you know?"

"He was stabbed in the back," I said. "His friend, Faye Landreth—your daughter, Sir—was the one witness to the murder."

Morrison Landreth nodded. "She is a genius for getting herself into messes. I only hope she is alive and safe."

"The man who murdered Val Roman was my personal lieutenant, Alashee." I sipped a drink while I studied the confusion in the face of the marshal. He was distressed to find his trouble striking so close home.

"Only yesterday we drank together," he mused sadly.

I nodded. "It is very strange that Alashee's life could shift so quickly from one path to another. He had been my personal servant for many years. He was an Afghan, with fierce eyes like a tiger, yet I never suspected that the day would come—"

LANDRETH and Oleander exchanged knowing looks, and as I went on to describe Alashee's appearance and characteristics, Landreth set

his glass down with a solid click.

"This guilty man has passed right through our hands," he said. "He came to us this morning as if to warn us. We knew, soon after we boarded the plane, that what he was telling us was a shield for his own guilt. He was even maligning your own character, Ben Addis—"

"Too bad," I said. "Evidently his mind was quite suddenly flooded with delusions about kidnappers and Scarlet Swordsmen."

My story was going over so well with these listeners that I forgot what effect it might be having upon Faye. It had been my intention to make her see that I would not champion the crimes of the Scarlet Swordsmen—that I was, in fact, as eager as anyone to have them exposed. For this hope of heroism had been born in me while I was still Val Roman.

But every twist of this investigation was tending to put Ben Addis on the spot. I began to writhe. I was as eager as anyone to expose this leader's evils; but it was far from comfortable to be dwelling in his body. The beat was turning on me.

"This Afghan fellow said that you were a Scarlet Swordsman yourself," Bill Oleander blurted.

The marshal laughed nervously and I tried to laugh with him.

Morrison Landreth was breathing hard. "I want to know what happened to my daughter. Where is she?"

"She's perfectly safe," I said. "I had my servants bring her here for safekeeping. You see, when I realized that Alashee was on the rampage—" I lowered my voice, hoping that Faye would not hear; for I was groping for explanations that would soften Landreth's stern eye, "I was actually afraid for her life. The fact is, he had fallen in love with her, and had murdered

Val Roman out of jealousy. Then, realizing she had the goods on him, he started after her. There was no telling what might have happened—"

Bill was on his feet. "If he dared touch her—"

"He didn't, my good man. But it was a close race. Her car ran out of gas. We saw from a distance. He was riding toward her. Luckily she hailed a bus. She intended to ride back to the agency."

"She didn't arrive."

"No. You see, Alashee boarded the second bus, thinking to overtake her before she reached home. So I had my men rescue her. Not knowing this, Alashee rode on to the south. When he found she had given him the slip, he bolted into the agency and gave you men the kidnapping story."

"I don't know how you know all this," said Landreth, tapping his monocle nervously. "I'll be only too glad to have her verify this story. At once. If you'll be so kind as to bring her out—"

"Yes, I want to see her," said Bill. "I flew all the way from England."

THE marshal rose and paced toward me. "I'm sorry, Ben Addis, to have to trouble you this way. But my job is to find Alashee immediately. If you will deliver Faye Landreth to her father at once, then I will proceed to make a search of your premises for Alashee. Since he was your servant, he has undoubtedly left some clues as to the direction of his escape—"

I smiled and motioned to the door.

"I have saved you a lot of trouble, officer," I said. "He came back here, I tried to make him give himself up, we had a brief skirmish of arms, and—well, I had to shoot him."

"Indeed?" The marshal heaved a big sigh. He turned to the others tri-

umphantly. "There. Alashee has been brought to justice already. I told you Ben Addis would help us. Er—what is his condition?"

"Dead," I said. "You'll find him in the third room on the left. Mobovarah will assist you with all the details."

"Delightful. Delightful." The marshal and two assistants went on in with a wonderful air of triumph.

"I don't see anything delightful about it," said Bill Oleander. "It still looks to me like Faye was just plain kidnapped. And if I don't see her alive in about a minute, I'm going to punch someone."

Faye Landreth stepped forth just then, a blonde bombshell all set to explode. There was no joyous reunion between her and her father, no romantic clinch between her and her newly arrived boy friend. The fire in her lively eyes told plainly enough that she was fuming with indignation.

"Father. . . . Bill. . . . Sure I'm glad to see you. We can talk about that later. You've really walked into something. Watch this man Ben Addis, and take what he says with a lot of salt. There's something dreadfully wrong here." The blaze of her attack turned on me. "Yes, I'm talking about you. What you told was half lies. You're a fake. You're not the merchant you pretend to be—"

"Miss Landreth!" I protested. "This deal has gone to your head!"

"I was hiding in the closet, father, and I heard everything. But that isn't all. I found a whole batch of scarlet turbans."

"What do you mean by that?" Landreth asked.

"This is the headquarters of the Scarlet Swordsmen. And Ben Addis is the leader. I can prove it!"

"You're mad!" I said. "Utterly mad."

"You're the mad one!" she cried. "You tried to make Alashee behead me, and when he wouldn't do it, you killed him. And then you have the brass to tell these lies. You're not even a cripple! You can walk as well as anyone!"

Yes, I could walk. I could run, too. And shoot. Those were talents that Ben Addis had held in reserve for emergencies like this.

I bounded from my cot, I seized Faye by the hand, and with a hard, brutal jerk I forced her into the doorway. My pistol flashed into my right hand. The verandah crowd fell back, defying me to shoot.

I didn't shoot. I flung the wide door, closed and bolted it. Faye struck at me, clawed at me, screaming for help. I caught her up in both arms. My left hand cupped over her mouth and muffled her wail.

I ran the length of the hall with her, and the servants who dodged into my path either jumped or fell like ten-pins. I heard the stiff command of the marshal, ordering someone to halt. But he couldn't have meant me. I was already gone.

Alashee's Arahian mount was ready. I swung one kicking blonde astride. She caught her foot in the stirrup. She flung the reins out of my reach. She almost charged away without me. But I caught onto the strappings and swung on as the horse galloped into the tunnel.

CHAPTER XI

Sojourn in the Red Rock Maze

"YOU won't take me far," Faye Landreth vowed. "They'll catch you along the foothill trail. You were unwise to—"

Her sentences were broken by the strenuous exercises of dodging low ceilings and narrow walls. In a moment we

emerged into the afternoon sunlight, and I gave the Arabian mount the reins. Faye found it useless to struggle for freedom from my strong arms.

"You were unwise to burden this horse with so much baggage. . . . Why don't you dispose of that flopping sack? We're not going camping, you know."

"I have a couple of surprises in that flopping sack."

"Lethal weapons, no doubt. It would be a pleasure to duel it out with you."

"The sack contains two monkeys named Sober and Squinty."

Faye made no response. The tension of her body relaxed slightly.

I added, "The donkey, Wonder, has been traded to a stockman in Ruklah. You will be able to purchase it if you ever want it."

"You're being very funny," said Faye, "trying to make me think you're going to let me live. I wonder what ingenious device you have planned for this special murder. . . . Where are we going? . . . Why, this is the Red Rock maze. They'll have no trouble tracing you here."

She looked back, and must have caught a glimpse of our pursuers galloping into our trail of dust. She was right, the burdens were telling on this horse. In a longer race I would have had no chance.

Into the red-walled tunnels we rode, bag and baggage, two human passengers, and two monkeys. I dropped the reins, allowing the horse to choose his own trail through the dark maze. I could not light a torch. My arms were quite occupied with holding my prisoner. I trusted to luck that the horse would find some familiar path.

Darkness closed in on us. For a long time we rode, slowly, cautiously, threading our way around black curves and under low ceilings. Sometimes I could hear the far-off echoes of our pursuers,

crossing pools of water or shouting signals to each other.

MY BREAK came when, after two hours or more of winding, the dry river tunnel we were following opened to the out-of-doors. A patch of evening sunlight showed against a high rock wall some fifty yards beyond and above this outlet.

It was impossible to ride the horse through this narrow opening. But I took my prisoner through, nevertheless, and with her the other two passengers, Squinty and Sober.

"We're going camping," I said. "Here is the ideal spot. Just make yourself comfortable. I can't tell you how long this summer outing may last."

I dragged the other bits of equipment through the aperture, then sent the Arabian pony on its way.

Faye looked around at the rocky walls towering all around us toward the sunset sky.

"I can get out of here," she said. "If you think you've found a natural prison—what are you doing?"

"I'm going to seal this opening," I said. "There's just a chance that our faithful horse might lead the rest of the party back in this direction."

It was easy to gather rocks with which to build a barrier across the tunnel opening. Faye cooperated. That is, she undertook to strike me down with flying rocks. She had to be watched every minute. But whatever she hurled at me, I caught.

And so, as darkness came on, we were isolated from the world, imprisoned within a spacious well of natural walls, under an oblong patch of deep blue India sky.

I lighted two torches and told Faye to take one of them.

"Here is a supply of torches," I said. "We will burn torches all night

if you wish. No harm will come to you as long as you do not try to escape. . . . There is a blanket for you."

CHAPTER XII

Apparition at Dawn

BOTH of us saw it by the light of dawn—an apparition that came slowly out of the shadowed east wall and moved into the center of our little rock-walled court.

It was a pond of mud and water with a thin cloud of mist hanging over it. Mired belly deep in the pool was a cow—a *sacred* cow. This apparition grew brighter and more tangible, crystallizing into reality before our eyes.

I walked slowly toward the center of the scene until my withered feet seemed to be impressing the cool mud with foottracks.

From the other end of our rocky prison Faye came, a few steps at a time. Her eyes were wide with astonishment. She pointed. A little old Hindu walked out of the shadows toward the pool.

"Do you—" Faye's whisper was barely audible. "Do you, Ben Addis, see what I see?"

"That," I said, "is the same little Hindu who was helped by Val Roman. It was his prayer—"

I hesitated. The little old Hindu was trying to help the cow out of the mud. I walked down toward him. "Could I help?"

He shook his head. "You have had your chance to help, and have won an everlasting reward. I need not trouble you again."

Faye looked at me wonderingly. Then she spoke the same words I had spoken. "*Could I help?*"

"You are young and strong," said

the Hindu. "I will tie a rope around the sacred cow's horns, and you may lend your strength . . ."

Then, as she began to comply, clinging to the rope with her lithe hands, the whole apparition faded away. It was gone with the mist. There was no Hindu, no cow, nor any sign of the muddy pool.

And yet I saw, as Faye looked at her hands, that the marks of the rope were there.

Frequently that day I saw her brushing her hands thoughtfully, and sometimes she strolled along the rocky wall from which the misty apparition had seemed to emerge.

"Val Roman told me about him," she said.

Her manner had become a few shades less suspicious and belligerent by the second evening. We talked briefly of what had happened. Mists of morning could take any strange form, she decided, and what we had heard must have been a dream.

But nothing could be said of such experiences that in any way satisfied. In our secret minds we knew that here was something we might never understand—something very special, out of this world, that was meant for us.

I did not encourage Faye to talk with me. I kept a barrier of space between us. Less often did she go to the sealed tunnel entrance to listen for the calls of the rescue party she was sure would come.

WHAT impressed her more than anything else, during our passing hours of imprisonment, was the striking friendship for me that the two monkeys demonstrated.

It was not as if I were a stranger to them, trying to make friends. But rather as if they knew me, and had always known me, and expected me to

call them by name.

"You give them orders just like Val used to do," she said. "But Val had his own unique rhythms that he would tap out on the musical drums."

"Something like this, I believe," and I picked up some small rocks and began beating them on a plate of stone. With a squeak of delight Squinty recognized the rhythm and began dancing. Very seriously, Sober turned a series of handsprings. He passed his hat to Faye.

"I must give him something," she said. "I know—"

She had picked a few berries earlier. So now she called Sober to come with her to the little patch of shrubbery.

"Here you are, Sober. You must take these to Ben Addis," she said.

The little fellow ate his share, and pocketed the rest.

"No," she said. "Take them to Ben Addis."

"Bring them to Val Roman," I said.

At this, Sober turned and came running to deliver the goods.

But poor Faye recoiled with sorrow and anger. Bitterly she spoke. "Don't say that. Don't you realize they are burying Val Roman this afternoon?"

CHAPTER XIII

Farewell to Ben Addis

BUT the new day brought new hopes and contemplations; it banished old hatreds and hurts and suspicions. As we ate our meager lunch of roots and berries and the last of the dried meats I had brought along, I was gratified to see that Faye wanted to talk with me again.

"Val was very fond of these pet monkeys," she said. "I wonder that they don't miss him more."

"No one should ever be missed too

much," I said. "But if you have wistful memories of Val, I'm not surprised. He loved you very much."

"How do you know so much?"

"He wanted very much to marry you, and he would have—if—"

"Life is so terribly complicated by *ifs*," Faye mused. It was unusual, I thought, for a vivacious girl like Faye to bring herself face to face with these contemplations. Always to dodge the serious side of life in favor of blight, gay moods, had been her pattern of existence. And now, again, she was dodging the weight of her own thoughts. "How soon are you going to let me go?"

"As soon as I know a little better what is in your heart," I said.

"You are talking like Val again. Every since you brought me here you have reminded me—in one way and another—"

"You did love Val, didn't you?"

For a moment she did not answer.

"Or have you never been in love?" I added.

"Somehow I've never thought very seriously about it. I have always been so gay, going my own way, enjoying lots of friends. And yet—"

"Yes?"

"It's true that I loved Val—deeply—as I never loved anyone else."

Sober nestled up to her, and she brushed her eyes against his furry shoulder.

I walked around slowly, breathing the sweet air of the afternoon, looking up at the patch of sky. If that blue could have reflected my face, I would have seen the tragic proof that I was no longer Val Roman. It would never do to try to tell her. . . .

"What you have said contents me," I said, returning to Faye's side. Tomorrow you may go. . . . No, this afternoon. After you have returned to your father and your friends all this

echo of sadness will fade away."

"Yes, I suppose it will."

"In time you will marry Bill Oleander. A nice fellow, Bill."

She nodded slowly. "Time heals all heartaches. I will learn to love him."

I unsealed the door. Yes, there were the sounds of searchers again. It would be safe for her to go alone. She would find her way to their voices.

"You are to take the monkeys with you," I said. "They are my gift to you and Bill Oleander."

SHE started into the tunnel. The monkeys hesitated, waiting for me to come, but I ordered them to stay with her. Then she came back to me slowly as I stood there watching her.

"You haven't been so unkind to me, Ben Addis," she said. "I can't understand. I was so sure you meant those awful commands you gave to Alashee on that fateful day. But now I know you didn't. . . . I want to tell you goodbye."

She offered her hand. I slipped my arm around her shoulder and drew her into a swift, sweet embrace.

I had not meant to kiss her. And yet, as I did so, she was not frightened. Rather, she was strangely drawn to me.

At once I realized that the quick footsteps of the searching party were beating a path to our rocky court. Faye suddenly thrust me away from her.

"Run, Ben Addis!" she cried. "They'll kill you. Run!"

She whirled to face them. Her arms extended in a tense command to make them stop.

"Don't, Bill. Don't shoot him!"

Bill Oleander pushed past her. He had seen me, no doubt, holding her in my arms, and had seen her thrust me

away. He leveled a rifle barrel in my direction. I leaped toward the nearest rocks for cover. He came on toward me. Impulsively, I reached for my pistol.

But I couldn't do it—not to save my own life. It was Bill who must live.

He followed me. He shot me down. My twisted, withered legs were struck from under me, bullets crumpling them. Then the death bullet plunged through my brain. . . .

"THAT will finish the Scarlet Swordsmen," someone of the rescue party was saying, as the swift flow of consciousness came back to me.

My trembling arm was being soothed by Faye. She was weeping softly.

"I'm not blaming you, Bill," she said to me. "I know you had to do it."

She was calling me Bill.

I glanced at my strong athletic arms, I passed my fingers over the rather prominent jaw of my smooth-shaven, harmless face.

They were laying a blanket over the body of Ben Addis. The party moved back along the channels of the Red Rock maze to the place where pack animals were waiting.

"We'll follow soon," Faye said. "I'm all right. . . . But I hated to see him killed. . . . He was kind to me."

"I understand perfectly. . . perfectly." I'm afraid I had to suppress a curious chuckle from her efforts to make me understand.

"What's the matter, Bill? What are you smiling about?"

"Just wondering about various things. I never shot a man before."

"You're changed somehow, Bill. You were such a boy when I last saw you."

"Changed, am I? You said it. Do you think my friends will know the difference when I take you back to

England—or are we going to stay right here and tour India with a little monkey circus? That would be kinda pleasant, wouldn't it?"

"Bill—no! I couldn't. It would remind me too much of someone—"

"Val Roman? . . . Sweetheart, don't you ever worry about my being jealous of Val?"

"Are you sure?" She looked at me wistfully. "Bill, if you and I are going to get along, you'd just as well know from the start. I loved Val Roman. Don't ask me ever to deny that love."

"You loved him very much?"

She nodded. "I'll try to forget, in time, perhaps."

"You needn't, dear," I said. "You'll find that there's something of Val

Roman in me, yes a lot of Val Roman. I suppose there's some of Alashee's fierceness and courage, too. And some of Ben Addis' keenness and cunning. And maybe a dash of their cruelty, too. Not to mention my own natural hot-headedness."

"Of course, dear."

"But look out for that gay, carefree, adventurous spirit of Val Roman. It's likely to crop out on me at any hour of the day, I warn you."

"Bill, you have changed. I never really knew you before. I—I think I'm going to like you a lot. Are you the sort of person who—"

"Who would help an old Hindu rescue a cow from the mud? Sweetheart, that's practically the story of my life."

BETWIXT CUP AND LIP LIES THE GERM

DO YOU know how germs get onto the rims of water glasses? If you were to kiss a sterile plate the germs implanted by the kiss, fed upon agar, would multiply at the rate of a generation every 15 or 20 minutes, becoming visible as colonies.

Some germs can cause serious infections. The simplest demonstration of the fact known to all, whereby germs can be communicated is through saliva exchange in every unsanitary drugstore, restaurant or bar room.

There are thousands of small eating and drinking places throughout the country and in many of them there is a lack of cleanliness due to manpower which appalls many laymen. We do not have to be a bacteriologist to suspect the presence of germs when our water glass wears a garland of secondhand lipstick.

You may say "Alcohol kills germs." Yes, but in a drink only if it is strongly alcoholic, if the germ stays in it long enough, and if the liqueur is poured up to the danger point—which is the brim.

Since drugstores sell a hundred germ killers, they should be the safest places of all, which does sound quite logical. But ironically enough, opposite the drug counter there usually stands a soda fountain where an attendant sozzles a glass laid down by someone else, refills it, and gives it to you. If the water is only warm, you may pick off the glass some of the germs parked there by the previous customer.

The modern city's water and milk supply is carefully checked for bacteria by health officers.

But what is the use of safeguarding our water and our milk if we are careless about what we drink them from?

These facts should not worry us too much because we must remember that there are germs everywhere—in the air, in the soil, and in our own bodies. Most germs are harmless, or useful—without germs dead plants and animals would litter the earth. Our bodies have powerful and mysterious mechanisms to combat the invasion of disease germs. Microbes may be tough but man is tougher. Normally the presence of germs in his system may mean only that he builds up greater resistance to them.

But that is no reason for daily ushering into the system a large assortment of other people's germs via the unclean soda fountain glass or restaurant tableware.

Here is a simple remedy for a condition that threatens the health of American men, women and children. Scalding hot water, and plenty of it. By this means, so simple that it can be used everywhere and by everyone in public places as well as in your home, the risk from bacteria can be greatly reduced. And by the addition of certain simple chemical disinfectants, bacteria can be entirely eliminated.

In every city you can see soda clerks cleaning glasses by dipping them into dirty brown water. Don't let them get away with it. If you must patronize such places, demand a paper cup. A stitch in time saves nine but this proverb can also be applied to cleanliness.—by Carter T. Wainwright.



Alien invaders parachuted down on the city . . .

PERIL FROM THE OUTLANDS

By WILLIAM LAWRENCE HAMLING

"A W, come on, Maribelle, just one more drink, huh?"

Felix Murphy gazed through slightly blood-shot eyes at the trim-aproned girl behind the bar. She stood with her hands on her hips, a pout puckering her red lips, and her blond hair swept back by a small blue ribbon. She shook her head.

"No Felix, aren't you ever going to make something of yourself? What kind of a man are you anyway? When you were back on Earth you always said nobody would give you a chance—now that you're on Mars with a good job at the Polar Water Works all you want to do is come here and get drunk!"

Felix lowered his eyes guiltily. She was mad again. He sighed. "Nobody gives a damn about me," he muttered. And he proceeded to feel very sorry for himself.

"I've been here on Mars over a year now," Felix complained, "and so far it's been the same old story—you show promise but there just isn't anything open right now! I'm getting disgusted!" He thrust his jaw out stubbornly and looked across the bar at Maribelle. He had come to Mars because it was the new frontier, the golden goose of the future. Get rich quick.

He scowled wearily. If it hadn't been for Maribelle he would be just another spacebum stranded on Tellus City. She had watched him drink his meager resources up in the past months, and somehow she couldn't stand by and watch him go down. Too many had done that before, and besides, she liked Felix. There was something about him—helpless like a little kitten. Maybe it was the mother instinct in her. Maybe it was because he really was a good Sanitary Engineer. Maybe all he really needed was a chance. Anyway she got it for him.

"I had my uncle put you on at the Polar Water Works because I thought you really wanted to get ahead!" she blazed at him angrily. "With trouble brewing between Tellus City and the Outlanders you could never want a better opportunity, but all you want to do is feel sorry for yourself!"

Felix looked hungrily at his empty glass and sighed. The Outlanders. What the hell did he care about them. They were on the other side of Mars, far from Tellus City. And besides, it was all rumor about trouble brewing. Tellus City was strong, the ruling force of Mars. What was Outland Port? Just a derelict city of outcasts and rebellious

There was no time for any counter measures—Felix had to turn the valve that would poison a whole city!

Martians—a pitiful bandful of renegades. What kind of an uprising could they make! Opportunity hell.

"I may as well get going," Felix said sulkily. He tossed a coin on the bar and strode away from Maribelle. She looked after him wistfully, sadly shaking her head.

FELIX paused outside, his eyes straining against the dark Martian night. "Another damn blackout," he muttered. Around him a cold brisk wind was blowing. It whistled eerily in the darkness and he felt a shiver run up and down his spine. The sooner he got to the Water Works the sooner he could settle down in a nice quiet office. Maybe even find a bottle laying around.

He trudged his way along through the darkness. Around him loomed the gaunt skeletons of countless warehouses, stocked with metal bearing ores awaiting shipment to Earth. Ahead, on the edge of Tellus City, would be the sprawling buildings of the Polar Water Syndicate, the throbbing hub of the Martian water supply. It piped the water from the polar cap to Tellus City and Outland Port. The only water on Mars. And the only place Felix had been able to get a job.

"Hell of a job, I've got!" he muttered into the wind. "Me, a graduate engineer, a damned flunky Night Supervisor!" Felix clunked his feet heavily along the street. What the hell chance did he have to show the Syndicate that he was worth anything? They had given him a good talk about the responsibility he held, keeping watch at night so nothing went wrong with the atomic water pumps. Oh sure, it was responsibility all right. About as much responsibility as a caretaker in a cemetery. And with as many people around to keep him company. He plodded on in the darkness.

It was then that he saw the light.

It streamed out from a half curtained window in one of the silent warehouses. And Felix frowned. This was strange, a light in a blackout. What the hell was wrong with those people? Didn't they know the Council had ordered a blackout? Felix came abreast of the building and paused, looking at a shadowed doorway.

He didn't see the man standing in it.

But the man apparently saw Felix. He stepped out into the darkened street and Felix was suddenly aware that something was being shoved into the small of his back.

"What the hell—" he blurted out.

"Keep quiet!" a voice rasped over the shriek of the wind. "Get inside—hurry!"

Felix was nonplussed. This was something new. Something strange. Something entirely uncalled for. Why would anyone want to shove a gun in his back? Felix didn't know. But he did know that there was no arguing with this man. He hastened to comply.

The door slammed shut behind him and he was in complete darkness again. The gun shoved into his back.

"All right, walk straight ahead," the voice hissed in Felix's ear. Felix was too nervous to object. He walked. Somewhere ahead a door opened and light streamed out. Felix walked toward the light. He walked into it. It was an office, a large dirty office, papers littered the floor and the top of a battered desk. A man was sitting behind the desk. A strange man. He was smiling up at Felix.

"Please sit down, Mr. Murphy," he said.

Felix moved mechanically to a chair. He stared at the man behind the desk. Was it a trick of the light—his face was green, and he didn't have any eyelids. It dawned on Felix.

"You're a Martian!" he blurted out.

"Exactly. It that so surprising?" the man asked caustically.

IT WAS to Felix. There were no Martians in Tellus City. There were no Martians anywhere except at Outland Port. They were kept there under close surveillance by the Council so they couldn't try to start an uprising. The Martians had resented Earthmen invading their planet. They had tried to fight, many times, but they were too few in numbers to succeed. The Earth Government had finally exiled them all to Outland Port and put a restriction on the City. No ship was allowed to land there or take off without permission of the Council at Tellus City. How had this Martian got here? What was he doing? And most of all Felix wondered how he knew his name. He inquired as much.

"I don't understand," he said haltingly. "How did you know my name—and what do you want?"

The green-faced man stared coldly at Felix. "I know many things, Mr. Murphy. I know for instance that you were just now on your way to the Polar Water Works. You are the Night Supervisor there. I have been watching you for some time."

Felix frowned. "Watching me? Who the hell are you!"

Fish-like eyes glared coldly at Felix. They seemed to look straight through him. Slowly the green face twisted into the semblance of a smile.

"I am called Taro Vargh. I represent the Martian government in Outland Port. I am here on business."

Felix stared puzzledly at the Martian. His glance strayed over to the door where the other Martian stood, a wicked looking gun leveled straight at Felix.

"What the devil is this all about?"

Felix demanded. "If you represent the Outland government what are you doing here?"

Vargh continued to smile. But as he smiled his hand pulled open a desk drawer. He pulled out a bottle and a glass from the desk. Felix watched as he poured an amber liquid.

"I can explain exactly what I mean after we have a little drink. You'll join me?"

Felix, for one of the few times in his life was not all sure that he wanted a drink. He didn't trust this Martian. He didn't trust any Martian for that matter. And there was something especially ominous about the way Taro Vargh was smiling. Felix felt a tremor of fear course through him as Vargh shoved the glass across the desk.

"Drink it," he said.

Felix didn't like the way he said it. It was more like an executioner giving a condemned man an order to drink a draught of poison. Poison. Felix stared at the glass and shuddered.

"I—I'm not thirsty," he stammered.

Vargh's eyes grew hard. "You'll drink this, Murphy. Now."

FELIX wanted to jump and run. The trouble was there was no place to jump to. Much less run. The other Martian stood in the doorway and his finger was tightened meaningly around the trigger of the gun he held. Felix gulped.

He picked up the glass. He stared into it. There seemed to be a sizzling in the liquid, as if it were strangely alive. Felix wondered fearfully if he would still be alive after he drank it.

Across from him Taro Vargh raised the bottle to his lips and took a long gulp. He lowered the bottle to the table and wiped his mouth appreciatively. Felix stifled his qualms and followed suit.

His head nearly hit the ceiling.

The glass clattered from Felix Murphy's hand and shattered on the floor. But Felix wasn't aware of it. He was burning up. Or so it seemed. He coughed. His face turned red. He choked. His face turned blue. There was an inferno raging in his throat. It felt as if somebody had stuck a blowtorch into his mouth and was trying to cauterize his stomach. Tears rolled in twin streams down Felix's face.

Then the agony passed. Through blurred eyes Felix saw the grinning face of Taro Vargh. Felix gasped hoarsely.

"What the hell was that stuff!"

There was a roaring buzz in Felix's ears but he heard the Martian reply.

"A very special brand of Martian *swill* Mr. Murphy. It is reserved for the Martian warriors."

The buzzing faded. But another sound took its place. The sound of high pitched laughter. Waves of laughter. Felix rubbed the tears from his eyes and looked—

Into dozens of green fish-eyed faces.

They were standing in various parts of the room, singly and in bunches. Their glassy eyes were fastened unwaveringly on Felix. They all wore military uniforms and seemed ready to go into action at the slightest provocation.

Felix stared terrified. His mouth dropped open and his eyes bulged. He began to back away, his knees shaking as he shoved the chair behind him.

Something sharp in the center of his back stopped him. He turned to stare into a grinning evil face. Not to mention the glittering barrel of a gun that was leveled at his stomach. Felix twisted away feeling very sick. He shook his head numbly and stared back at the desk. But they were still there. Dozens of Martians. Big husky Martians. Grinning Martians. Laughing Martians. Their fish-like eyes fixed

steadily upon him.

"What's the matter, Murphy, you're trembling."

The words hit Felix and brought him back to reality. He glared into the smiling face of Taro Vargh. The Martian was standing beside the desk now, and he proffered the bottle.

"Will you have another drink?"

Felix shuddered. "These—these others!" he stammered. "Where did they come from? I didn't see them before. . . ."

"Exactly." Vargh's voice was crisp. "You didn't see them, and yet they have been here all the time."

FELIX stared at the faces around him. They were evil. They were vicious. There was something death-like in the way they continued to grin at him. He heard Vargh speaking.

"These warriors were killed in past battles with your Earthmen. But their spirits cannot rest until they have taken vengeance upon the invader who has stolen their planet. We Martians are an old race. Our science is based on different principles from that of yours. We have secrets of life and death you will never know. The *swill* you drank is one of these. By drinking it you are now visible to them and to their vengeance—as all this city will be before morning!"

A shout went up from the milling Martians.

"God!" whispered Felix, and covered his face in his hands. He breathed a prayer before he took his hands away from his face. But they were still there, staring at him. They had even moved closer. Felix quailed before them and Vargh's final words echoed in his mind: —as all this city will be before morning. . . .

"What do you mean?" Felix managed to gasp out.

The smile faded from Vargh's green fish-like features.

"I mean that I have waited patiently for you, Mr. Murphy. It has taken me many weeks for this moment. Tellus City is wrapped in a blackout. You work at the Polar Water Works. You are the night supervisor. You are going to take us there."

Felix stared bewilderedly. "I don't understand," he faltered. "What do you want at the water works?"

Vargh laughed harshly. "In the rear of this warehouse there is a rocket van. In that van is loaded a supply of Martian *swill*. That *swill* will be mixed with the drinking water of Tellus City. The water that is piped from the polar cap. By tomorrow the populace will drink of that water. When they do, the Martian warriors will be visible to all of Tellus City. Your earth science cannot cope with this weapon. They will die by the thousands before they know what has happened. And the city will be at the mercy of the Outlands!"

The shouts filled the room as the Martians glared triumphantly.

Felix was deafened by the noise and he glanced around fearfully as they began to close in on him. Some of them had long steel knives slung at their belts. Most of them became suddenly unslung in a whirling flash that seemed to come within a hair's breath of slicing his throat. Horror filled Felix's eyes. One of the Martians pointed scornfully at Felix and sneered:

"You are like all Earthmen when you face death—a coward!"

That did it. Felix Murphy, his face and lips trembling with rage felt a surge of uncontrollable anger sweep through him. A coward! So they thought he was a coward—sure they had all the odds on their side—fifty to one. But Felix knew at that moment he wasn't afraid. Even if he had to die.

"You feel pretty secure as long as you have an Earthman outnumbered, don't you Vargh!" he sneered.

The Martian's face twisted angrily. "The Martians fear nothing!" he shrilled. "We ruled Mars for ages before you earth dogs came—and we will rule it again! We will wipe your race from our planet—just as we will do in Tellus City tonight!" He puffed his face arrogantly. "But I have wasted enough time. We will leave here now. I have the rocket van waiting in the rear. You will take us to the Water Works. You will get us inside. One false move and you will die!"

There was no mistaking the murderous intent behind those words. Felix felt his spine tingle. Vargh turned to the milling Martians and spoke in the harsh ancient Martian dialect.

They flung Felix aside in a rushing surge for the door of the room. Felix toppled against the desk and glared after them. Vargh stood quietly by, waiting. There was a gun in his hand as he motioned Felix toward the door. Felix went. And as he went he felt his courage slipping. There was no way he could possibly stop them alone—and the irony of it all! He had asked for responsibility; now the entire Water System, the whole might of Tellus City rested on his shoulders. And he didn't like the weight. He shuddered as he envisioned a peaceful city raising countless glasses of water to drink—of death. He saw Martians pouring over Tellus City. He saw panic, destruction, blood and death. He saw thousands of grinning fish-eyed faces brought to life by a science older than Earth itself. What could he do?

THE rocket van shot away into the night. Silence hung over Tellus City like a pall of doom. A fate worse than doom rode with the loaded van as

it shot along the deserted thoroughfares on the edge of the city. Taro Vargh was at the controls. The hiss of the power tubes was the only break in the silence. Felix Murphy sat tense and watchful beside Vargh. He saw the last fringes of the city vanish behind them and they were rushing out across a barren plain.

Felix prayed for a detachment of the Earthguard. He prayed for even a lowly patrol car. He pleaded for a single Earthman. But there was nobody. Nothing but a barren plain and Tellus City behind. Overhead, Phobos shed an eerie light down on Mars. Felix wondered if there were Martian gods up there laughing at him.

Ahead, in the dim glow of Phobos loomed a huge sprawling shadow. It was the Polar Water Works. Felix could dimly make out long snaky pipelines that stretched off into the darkness of the plain. The rocket van approached swiftly. A towering wall shot at them, enclosing the huge plant. Vargh maneuvered the van around the wall. He stopped before a towering steel gate.

A voice called out in the darkness.

"Hey, don't you know the plant's closed for the night? Get that freight car out of here!"

Beside Felix, Vargh whispered savagely, "Remember, one false move and you die!"

Felix gulped. "It's me, Charlie—Felix Murphy."

The voice called out again. "Oh, I didn't know it was you, Murphy. What the hell are you doing in that crate?"

Felix had to think fast. Especially when he felt cold steel caressing his Adam's apple. "My strato car broke down in town, Charlie. I borrowed this thing to get to work."

There was a moment of silence on the other side of the gate. Then slowly

it began to open. Felix could hear Vargh muttering beside him. Then the van shot through the opening and past Charlie in his watch tower. Felix felt his last hope sink.

They moved along a curving metal driveway, passing around a corner of the sprawling building. Vargh's voice cut through the darkness.

"We will use the rear entrance. Where is it?"

Felix sighed wearily and pointed off to the left. Vargh cut the van sharply and the faint light of Phobos revealed a long platform and a vertical steel door in the side of the building. Vargh whipped the rocket van around and hacked it slowly against the platform. He cut the power.

"We will go inside, Mr. Murphy. You shall lead us directly to the main water outlet. Do not try to signal anybody. I will gladly kill you!"

Felix nodded sullenly in the dark and they piled out of the van. Around him, Felix heard the rest of the Martians muttering. Something hard jabbed into his back and he scurried forward. Vargh was close at his heels.

The steel door slid up soundlessly. But then Felix knew it wouldn't have mattered. There was nobody else on duty in the building at night. It was Felix's job to see that nothing went wrong.

INSIDE, a soft light threw shadows along the walls. The light came from small radiant globes set high in the ceiling. Massive dynamos whirled eerily around them. The sound was like a distant buzzing. Felix glanced quickly behind him. His heart sank. The Martians were filing in and cutting off his only possible means of escape. Vargh was tense.

"Quick! Where is the main outlet!"

Felix led the way around a maze of

pumps and huge cylindrical piping. They passed towering dynamos and atomics and entered a large chamber. The center of the room was barren, but the sides were a tangled maze of valves and pipes. Spidery steel catwalks rose against the walls. Felix stared for a long moment at the valves and felt another sharp jab in his back.

"It's over there," he said angrily. Vargh followed his gaze.

"Which one?" the Martian's voice was eager.

Felix walked slowly across the room to a huge wheel-like valve in the center of the pipe system. He pointed to it. "That's it."

Vargh looked for a long moment at Felix. When he spoke, his voice was a sibilant hiss.

"You had better not be lying to me!" he said.

For the first time Felix noticed the object Vargh held in his left hand. It was a small black globe of steel with a long lever running down its side with a silver band holding it taut against the outside casing. Felix stared at it.

"What's that?" he asked fearfully.

The Martian grinned, his fishy eyes wide and scornful. "That is a small atomic bomb. After I have finished my work I am going to destroy the control center. I will leave nothing to chance!" He whirled to the Martians milling around behind him.

A harsh jargon sped from his lips. The Martians nodded and began running across the chamber.

Felix watched helplessly while they carted in small metal drums and lined them up beside the valve. Vargh stepped over beside the wheel control and strained against it. It turned slowly at first, and then spun free. A new sound grew. The sound of rushing water, water rushing in a swift forceful stream. The valve was open,

revealing a large aperture in the pipe. Vargh was nodding eagerly.

Felix's face was a grave mask of defeat as he watched the amber liquid being emptied into the rushing stream of water. He saw it pour in, drum after drum, and knew it was beyond his power to stop them now.

"Soon all of Tellus City will be at our mercy!" Vargh was glowing with triumph. "I have waited years for this moment! All Martians have waited. You are doomed!"

Felix was nearly crying with rage. Vargh laughed at him.

"You Earthmen are all alike—weak and stupid. You can only boast. We Martians use our age-old science to rule!"

The *swit* was gone. All that remained was a pile of emptied metal drums. Felix looked at Vargh and felt a shudder go through him. His usefulness was gone now. They would kill him—and in the morning . . .

"Show me the control center," Vargh rasped suddenly. He hefted the atomic bomb in his hand.

Felix shrugged resignedly and pointed across the sprawling chamber. He led Vargh across it.

THEY were walking toward a large panel with dials and switches. Felix glanced cautiously over his shoulder. The rest of the Martians were still standing around the open valve. Vargh was looking straight ahead at the panel.

Felix twisted sharply and smashed his fist into that green fish-eyed face. Dark blood spurted. Vargh staggered back screaming.

On the other side of the room the Martians heard the cry and jumped forward. Felix saw the gleam of steel in their hands.

Felix ran toward the panel. He ducked around behind it with Vargh,

his face streaming blood, hot on his heels.

Vargh rounded the panel to meet Felix's fist again. This time the Martian staggered and fell. The bomb dropped from his fingers.

There were sharp cries from the center of the room. The Martians were running toward him. Felix grabbed the bomb and tore at the restraining silver band. It snapped and the lever popped into the air. Felix swung his arm back and tossed it around the steel panel. The bomb hurtled in a high arc through the air.

Felix hit the floor.

It wasn't a moment too soon.

There was a blast. There was a blinding flame. Felix was lifted bodily off the floor and dropped again. The huge building shook. Then there was silence.

Felix crawled painfully to his knees and peered around the edge of the control panel. His mouth dropped open.

The center of the room was a big hole. Wisps of smoke curled from the chasm. But there weren't any Martians. A faint smile crossed Felix's lips. He had got them!

All but one.

Taro Vargh hurled himself screaming upon Felix's back. There was a short gleaming knife in his upraised hand. His face was a smeared mask of blood and teeth. Felix was knocked flat on his stomach.

The movement saved him. Vargh was caught off balance and plunged forward over Felix's head. Felix clawed upward, savagely, desperately. He caught the Martian's belt and twisted sharply. Vargh slid sideways off his back and then Felix was on top of him grabbing desperately for the knife.

The blade caught Felix in the shoulder. There was a numb feeling in his arm. He smashed savagely at the Mar-

tian's face and his teeth clamped over Vargh's hand. The Martian let out a cry of pain and released the blade. Felix closed his fingers over the hilt. His eyes were wild and victorious as he saw the flash of fear in the Martian's eyes.

He rammed the blade deep into the green-skinned throat.

A red surge welled up over Felix's hand. Vargh went limp beneath him. Felix crawled slowly from the Martian's body. A great sickness seized him. He tried to get to his feet. His head was swimming. His arm was numb. There was a buzzing in his head. A roaring buzz. Everything was roaring. The whole world was roaring.

Blackness closed over him like a shroud.

THERE were a lot of voices. There were, in fact, a lot of people. Felix became dimly aware of them. He opened his eyes.

He was in a white room. More than that, he was in bed. He was propped up against a pillow, his left arm bandaged securely to his side. A woman in white was smoothing the sheets around him.

What the hell! Felix thought. Is this a hospital? What am I doing in a hospital?

Other people came into his focus. Faces were smiling down on him. Faces with long black cigars stuck in them. Memory and recognition flooded back.

There was the Water Syndicate Commissioner—the Council Chairman—men with televisor cameras—and—

Something warm and soft was moving on the bed beside him.

"Maribelle!" Felix gasped.

"Oh, Felix!" she cried and threw herself upon him. Felix felt his head swimming again. Only this time it was from the closeness of the girl as she

twined her arms around his neck. Behind them someone coughed loudly. A nurse walked up and gently pulled Maribelle away.

The commissioner removed his cigar.

"If my niece can only wait a few minutes, I'll be through," he said gruffly. "Felix, that was a splendid thing you did last night. I want you to know that the Polar Syndicate and all of Tellus City is proud of you. If it hadn't been for you that Martian might have caused untold sabotage to our vital water works."

Felix frowned. "There were at least fifty of them!" he protested. "They were going to poison the city water—"

They all laughed. The Council Chairman scoffed chidingly. "Come, come, Murphy. There was only one Martian, though a dangerous one at that; we've been after him for a long time. And I can assure you the water isn't poisoned in any manner of form. But, as the Commissioner has said, we're all proud of you. You've shown that you can handle responsibility and—" he coughed—"we have a nice position waiting for you on the engineering staff. You are a credit to Tellus City!"

Felix had been looking at them bewilderedly. There *had been* over fifty of them—he had gotten them with the bomb. . . .

Maribelle pushed her way back to the bed. She had a small telecaster in her hand. She plugged it into the wall.

"Ob, Felix, I'm really proud of you," she said, smiling. "The televisions are full of reports about you. Listen!"

She twisted a dial. There was a sharp hum and a flickering on the screen. Then a man's head appeared on the plate. He was talking in crisp, staccato sentences.

"And that, people of Tellus City is

how one of our able citizens saved the crucial water supply of Mars from destruction at the hands of a fanatic Martian." He paused for a moment as someone handed him another sheet of paper. Then he was talking again. "Flash! As a result of the attempt on the Polar Water Works last night the Council, fearing it was the beginning of an uprising in the Outlands, sent the Earthguard fleet storming down on Outland Port. When they got there they found the city in a panic of havoc and destruction. Thousands of Martians were running amuck through the streets killing each other in a wild frenzy. And the fleet found a well equipped Martian task force ready for an assault on Tellus City.

"The authorities are baffled at the turn of events in Outland Port. There is no logical reason obtainable for the mass self-destruction of the Martians at a time when it seemed they were ready to take the offensive against Tellus City. We'll try to have more information on this for you later on. . . ."

The voice droned on. Voices in the room grew in a mounting babble.

But Felix didn't hear them. He settled back against his pillow and a restful sigh escaped him. He had shown them that he was capable of handling a responsible job. Even more so than they knew. He was thinking of the Water Works. He was thinking of the Martians pouring the strange *swirl* into the open valve.

Felix was thinking about that valve.

For the valve he opened was the main water outlet from the polar cap to Outland Port!

The authorities were baffled. But Felix wasn't. He knew!

"How about a drink, Maribelle, huh?" he said wistfully.

She beamed at him.

THE END



"Fits you perfect in the front!"

I'll Be Fleeced

By **BERKELEY LIVINGSTON**

**When Jason got the Golden Fleece
he didn't dream what trouble it would
mean to Stumpy Reed many centuries later!**

BUT look," Big Louie said, "how nice it fits."
"Sure," echoed Little Louie, "and think how warm it'll be."

They stood to either side of the farmer in front of the mirror and looked admiringly at him. The only expression on the farmer's face was disgust. The reason for his disgust was all too apparent. He was wearing it!

Big and Little Louie were brothers, partners in the second-hand clothing business their father had left them on his death. Little Louie's name was really Sam. But he had been called Little Louie for so many years, his given name was almost forgotten by him. In looks they were alike, except that Big Louie was what his name implied: a big man, fat by nature and by appetite. Little Louie was just that. Little, thin by nature and by appetite. Yet people instantly noticed their kinship.

This farmer they were both waiting on, had come in ten minutes before, asking for a sheepskin coat. And for ten minutes they had been trying to sell him the coat he was so critically appraising in the mirror.

"Now look, gents," he said stubbornly, "I don't like it! Blast it! Ain't you got nothin' else in this place but this thing?"

"Sure, sure," said Big Louie, "we got more. But tell me, what's wrong with this coat?"

"Well," replied the farmer, "it's the color. Ain't never seen one this color before. Wouldn't mind if it were on the inside. But shucks, gents, I'd scare my milk cows dry, wearin' this thing."

Big Louie sighed. Little Louie played echo. That cursed coat! They'd had it for five years, and it seemed they were never going to sell it.

It was just an ordinary sheepskin coat. It had a front and lining of fleece. It looked as though it would keep a man warm on the coldest day. If only the color were different. The farmer was speaking again:

"Nope! The color! Never seen such an ugly yellow. My wife'd throw me out, she sees the color. Sorry, but I'm gonna look elsewhere."

Big Louie, the coat draped over his arm watched the overalled figure go out the door.

"Blast it anyway!" he said savagely. "I'm gettin' rid of this thing. I'm gonna give it away. See if I don't."

"Now take it easy," cautioned Little Louie. "Who knows? Maybe someday some guy'll walk in here who's color blind."

"Well, if he ain't color blind, he will

he when he sees this coat," Big Louie groaned, as he hung it up.

Everybody around the corner of Clark and Van Buren knew about that coat. More than once Big Louie had actually tried to give it away. But no one, not even the most ragged bum who hung around Moc's Mansion, could be induced to wear it. But somehow, as much as they wanted to get rid of it, they always had hope someone would be insane enough to buy it.

'STUMPY' REED looked cold.

Stumpy *was* cold! So were the few people who passed him as he stood shivering on the corner of Clark and Van Buren.

"Ain't this hell?" he grumbled to the empty, frigid air. "No place to flop. And my luck, the weather drops to zero. But that's me: no luck in anything."

He drew the jacket which served as an overcoat, tighter to his gaunt frame. But the wind, sharp as a razor and much colder, made the gesture a futile one.

It was that time of morning when some of the cheap taverns and beaneries on the street were closing for the night, yet still too early for the others to open. Reed sighed in helpless weariness. His gaunt, furrowed features reflected the misery he felt.

Across Clark Street, the illuminated clock in the window of Harry's Hand Laundry read three-thirty. Stumpy was reminded of something. He knew how to get warm.

He shuffled across Clark and down Van Buren till he reached the alley in the middle of the block. Turning down the alley, he counted off four doorways. The fifth was the back door to the laundry.

Stumpy had been there before. He knew how to open it. Even with fingers freezing from cold, it took him but a minute and he was inside. Quickly he

made his way to the office. A small electric bulb illuminated the interior and showed him the old-fashioned cast iron safe in a corner of the room.

Stumpy knelt by the safe and began to twist the dial.

"Six-right, eighteen-left, four-right, three-right and back to zero," he said aloud as he twisted the dial. At the word "zero," the door swung open. He smiled to himself, nodded in satisfaction and closed the door again.

"Six-right, eighteen-left, four-right, three-right and back to zero," he repeated the formula. Again it proved the "open sesame."

He repeated the operation a half-dozen more times and took a rest. Already he was feeling warmer.

"What a hell of a way to keep warm," he ruminated sadly. "Opening and closing a safe all night long. Oh, well, who knows? Someday I might run into a safe what's got a little dough in it."

His fingers were no longer cold. Nimble their sensitive tips twisted the dial again. There was the sound of the safe door opening—and another sound. Someone was coming into the laundry through the back door. Quickly he stood up and flicked the light switch off. A narrow beam of light came drifting across the floor. It was the night watchman. Stumpy didn't think the watchman would believe him if he said he was only opening the safe to keep warm.

He lifted the trap door which led to the basement. Harry shared a common basement with Big Louie, whose place was next door to the laundry. Usually Stumpy made his way into Big Louie's and out the back into the alley. But tonight he changed the routine.

"It's too damned cold!" he muttered.

He looked about the dimly lit confines of the second-hand shop. He had seen it before, both by day and by

night. Strangely enough, in spite of his practice of opening safes, Stumpy was inherently honest. He just didn't like to work, that was all.

He started to walk to the rear and paused at the rack where the yellow sheepskin coat was hanging. His fingers moved across the soft yellow fleece caressingly. And then the coat was on his back. He stood before the triple mirror and admired its effect—and warmth. It was a secret luxury Stumpy had indulged in for several years. He knew that his cronies would have made life miserable for him had they known of his love for that coat.

Suddenly he made a decision. With determined strides he made for the rear door. It closed behind him—and he was still wearing the fleece coat.

"Big Louie's always wanted to get rid of this coat," he thought grimly. "So I'm making his wish come true."

HE WALKED over to Grant Park.

It had started to snow and Stumpy turned the collar up around his neck. The coat sent a fine feeling of warmth through his whole body.

He found a dry bench under a lamp and sat down, thrusting his hands into the pockets of his new coat for warmth. The fingers of his right hand closed about the smooth surface of a metal disk. It was caught between the lining of the pocket and the inner cloth.

Stumpy looked at the disk curiously. Round in shape, it was the size of a half-dollar. There was a perforation at the top and bottom of the disk. Stumpy held it so the metal would get all the light of the lamp above. Then he noticed the characters engraved on the disk.

He couldn't quite make them out. He bent his head closer and twisted the disk about, attempting to make out the barely decipherable characters. He

brought the disk up close to his face.

"Seems like a ship," he murmured. "Yep. That's what it is—a ship."

The light seemed to have grown suddenly dimmer. His eyes were tired of looking at the disk. It seemed as though the ship was moving. He closed his eyes in a sudden spell of dizziness. The world seemed to be revolving around his park bench. He had that gone feeling in his stomach as if he were on a swiftly falling elevator. The bench swayed and rocked — swayed and rocked—and Stumpy opened his eyes.

"Ow," he groaned. "My head. I'm dizzy. Stop the elevator!"

"What did Jason say?" a voice asked.

STUMPY looked up into the yellow-bearded face above him and fell backward with a crash.

"Hey!" he yelled, as he stood up, "where am I?"

Yellow-beard laughed heartily, pounding his mail-clad chest as he did so.

"So the wine was too much for Jason! He has forgotten his ship, the Argo, and his boon companion, Hercules."

Stumpy looked about him wonderingly. He was on a ship! Not far off he could see the rocky headland toward which the ship was moving. A number of sailors dressed only in breech clouts were busy trimming the sails and preparing for the ending of the voyage.

Three young men sat about a wine barrel, arguing among themselves.

"See," said Hercules, lifting Stumpy from the bench as easily as if he were a fly, "Orpheus still argues with Castor and Pollux. They will come to blows soon if you do not set them a'-right."

He fairly dragged Stumpy before the three around the wine barrel.

"Here," said Hercules, "is the hero himself. Ask him."

"Yes, Jason," said one in an almost

feminine voice, "tell us how many soldiers you slew. Were there not two hundred and seventy there?"

"Hold, Orpheus!" cried the other two in unison. "You are putting a number in his mind. It is not fair."

Stumpy grinned weakly at the four faces and said the first number that came to his mind.

"Six hundred and eight."

"Six hundred and eight," said Hercules, awe in his voice. "By my beard but I would be proud to slay so many myself."

Incredulity and disbelief were in their eyes.

"Oh come now, Jason. There weren't that many!" said Orpheus.

"Yep," reiterated Stumpy. "Six hundred and eight."

"Even if he saw double, there weren't that many," said Castor to himself. Aloud he said:

"And I suppose the bulls were twenty in number?"

"Well," Stumpy hedged, wondering what this was all about. How had he gotten here, and how was he going to get back?

A shout from one of the sailors saved Stumpy from further answers.

"Land ho!" the sailor shouted. He was at the prow of the ship. The five men looked in his direction—and Stumpy felt his jaw drop. His beautiful, yellow-fleece coat was nailed to the prow of the ship. That is, just the fleece itself was nailed there. What had happened to the rest of the garment was another question he'd like very much to have answered.

The Argo and its crew of heroes had come back home. There were several hundred people on the long pier, waiting to welcome Jason and his friends. A cheer went up as the ship dropped anchor and the landing plank touched the pier.

AS THE four friends started to leave they noticed Jason wasn't with them. They turned and saw he was at the prow of the ship. He was removing the fleece from the wood on which it was nailed. They waited until he rejoined them.

He answered their unspoken question:

"Well, it's mine, isn't it?" he said with some asperity.

They hastened to assure him.

"Of course, Jason. No one can deny your right to it."

At sight of Jason bearing the Golden Fleece, a tremendous cheer went up. The people surged forward to touch or to see it at close hand.

Hercules put him down on the cobblestoned street.

"Where to now, Jason?"

Stumpy, the fleece held tightly in the crook of his arm, looked inanely up into the laughing eyes.

"To sip more wine, I suppose? At the Golden Boar, eh?" Hercules' head gestured toward the entrance to a nearby inn.

Stumpy looked in the direction indicated and saw a man stagger up a low flight of stone steps leading into the saloon. A sign showing a golden boar hung over the steps.

"Yeah," said Stumpy, as he started for the inn, "I could use a drink."

Hercules laughed and strode after the others, who were on their way to the center of the city where the inns were more elaborate and the wine of a better vintage.

The interior of the inn Stumpy entered was full of gloom, smell and noise. A villainous looking waiter who was badly in need of a shave, came up to Stumpy, after he sat down at a small rough-hewn table, and stood glowering down at him.

Stumpy, just getting out of the daze

he had been in, was examining his clothes with interest. Around his chest was a heavy suit of mail, made of steel disks overlapping each other to make a closely woven metal garment. Beneath that he wore a sort of nightgown which came to his knees. Sandals were on his feet. A short sword in a scabbard hung from a belt around his waist. A pouch swung heavily from the belt.

Stumpy pulled the pouch from the belt and emptied it on the table. He gasped in delight at the golden shower which lay sparkling up at him. His gasp was echoed by the waiter:

"Gold! Enough to buy a thousand slave girls!"

Stumpy looked up in sudden alarm. He didn't like the looks of what he saw. Neither the avarice in the waiter's eyes nor the way he was fingering the knife stuck in his belt. He became aware, too, of his surroundings and the people.

Sailors, a few warriors and the usual scum of a waterfront. Stumpy licked suddenly dry lips.

"Ha ha," he laughed hollowly, as he raked the coins back into the pouch. "Yes, I guess I can get a drink, can't I?"

The waiter regarded the pouch with hungry eyes.

"Sure," he said. "Enough to get you drunk—and soon, I hope."

THE waiter returned bearing an earthenware cup. Stumpy tasted its contents and almost spat the sour wine out. He managed to get it down, however, and ordered another. Two sailors at a table only a few feet from his, kept looking at him. He became aware of their interest and of what they were saying.

"So that is Jason?" one asked.

"Yes," replied the other. "Doesn't look like much, does he? But I saw him do wondrous things. See that fleece

under his arm? He killed a thousand men for it. And a fire-breathing dragon, too!"

The other murmured an admiring comment.

Stumpy wondered who this Jason was they were talking about. Then he realized they were looking at him. It was about him, Stumpy, they were talking! Well! So he had killed a thousand men—and a fire-eating dragon!

"Hey, waiter!" he shouted suddenly.

"Well!" growled the waiter, when he arrived.

"Is this rat poison the only stuff ya' got here?" Stumpy asked gruffly.

"What's the matter, pretty boy? Don't ya' like it?"

Stumpy fumbled at the sword for a second, then it came free from the scabbard. He banged on the table with it.

"No!" shouted Stumpy. "I don't!"

The waiter, seeing Stumpy pulling at his sword, stepped back a few steps and whipped out his knife. He went into a cat-like crouch and began to circle the table.

Stumpy gulped in consternation. He had expected the waiter to beg for mercy, not make a fight of it. His chair clattered to the floor, as he hastily got to his feet. If he could only get to the door before the waiter got to him. But before he could move, the two sailors who had been talking about him, had grabbed bold of the waiter.

"Hold, man!" one of them said warningly. "Do you seek death?"

"Out of my way!" yelled the waiter twisting savagely about in his efforts to get free. "I'll slit his throat from ear to ear!"

"After Jason's sword makes a bloody stump of your neck, you fool?" the other sailor asked derisively.

The waiter stopped his struggling. He looked wonderingly from one face

to another.

"That—is Jason?" he gasped.

"Can't you see the fleece he carries? It is the Golden Fleece!"

"Yes, I see." He shrugged his shoulders and the sailors released him. "I thought heroes looked otherwise," he commented sadly and came back to Stumpy.

"My mistake, Master," he said in apology. "I did not recognize you as Jason."

"S all right, pal," said Stumpy. He picked up the chair and sat down again. "Now bring me the best in the house. And some for my friends here." He motioned for the two sailors to join him. "And waiter——"

"Yes sir?"

"Have a drink on me."

"Thank you, sir."

THE wine was better this time. The sailors, under the influence of the wine and Stumpy's sly promptings, told him all about this Jason.

"H'm," said Stumpy to himself, "this makes me out to be pretty big stuff around here. Looks like local yokel made good. Maybe I can cash in on the gravy train."

At the tenth round of drinks Stumpy wondered why it took two waiters to serve five people. At the fifteenth round, he looked blearily across the table. The two sailors had called a halt to drinking and were both asleep.

"The winner and shtill shampeen," Stumpy said woozily as he got to his feet. He swayed drunkenly and felt a pair of arms take hold of him. He started to turn and almost fell down. He finally made it by using the table as a support. His wavering glance came to rest on the person in front of him. It was the waiter.

"Steady, Master," he said, holding Stumpy erect. "The wine is strong, eh?"

"Sshtrong?" mumbled Stumpy, as he swayed in the waiter's arms. "Not too shtrong for Sstumpy Jashon who knocked off two thousand guysh an' a couple of fire-eatin' dragonsh."

He staggered away from the waiter and headed for the stairs and almost fell as the scabbarded sword swung between his legs.

"Master, master," the waiter was at his side, "you have forgotten. Payment for the drinks."

"H'm. Sho I did. Sho I did. Figgered I wash back at Sharleysh. 'Scuse me. Here——" he dipped into the pouch and pulled out several of the gold pieces, thrust them into the man's hand—"keep the shange."

The waiter bowed so low his forehead almost scraped the floor.

Stumpy's exaggerated gesture of dismissal almost dumped him on his ear. Again the waiter came to his rescue. He helped him up the stairs. Night had fallen. Here and there lights glowed through the chinks in doors or gleamed golden through windows.

Stumpy stared drunkenly about him. The waiter, one arm around Stumpy holding him erect, was solicitous.

"Where to, Master? Shall I call a litter?"

"Huh?"

"Do you wish to go home, Master?"

"Wha' for? I got dough 'n——" Stumpy's knees suddenly gave—"better ge' me to a hotel."

The waiter looked around and spotting two litter bearers close by, called to them.

"Take this drunk to some inn where he can sleep off his wine," he said to them. When they turned the corner of the street, the waiter opened his clenched fist. The three gold pieces Stumpy had given him were suddenly fifteen in number. He grinned slyly to himself. It had been a profitable busi-

ness, helping the drunken man.

. . . Stumpy opened his eyes and looked about him. He was lying in a bed in a large square room. Sunlight streamed through an open window. Stumpy sat up and the room became a whirling box of which he was the center. He put his hands up to his face and moaned:

"Oww! What a dream! What a drunk dream *that* was!"

And then he was sober. Instantly! He looked wildly about him. It wasn't a dream. The corselet of armor on the floor. The belt with its scabbarded sword. This room. He wasn't back in Moe's Mansion.

His fingers, resting on the bed, felt a silky, curly cloth. He looked down and saw the Golden Fleece and remembered all that had happened to him. Slow, painfully, with a great many moans, he dressed himself. . . .

OELUS, "the One-Eyed," looked up.

His one eye blinked in startled disbelief at what he saw. A warrior confronted him, but such a warrior as he had never seen before—and hoped never to see again. The man had buckled on his chest armor backward. The short sword, which should have hung straight and clean at his side, hung suspended between his legs. Under his arm he carried a golden-colored fleece. There was a look of abject misery on the warrior's face.

"Look, mister," Stumpy whined, "Can you tell me where I am?"

Oelus scratched his hair reflectively. Of course, this man had been drunk the night before. But this was a new day. Still, it was a fair question.

"You are at the inn of Oelus, the one-eye," Oelus answered.

"Yeah. But what town is this?"

Oelus took several steps backward. If this man were mad, he wanted room

in which to move.

Stumpy saw Oelus move backward and realized the reason.

"Never mind that," he said. "Where's there a tailor in this burg?"

"A—a tailor?"

"Yes, yes. A tailor."

"Not far. Only two houses removed."

"Thanks." Stumpy started for the door.

"Wait! Payment please! For your lodgings."

Stumpy stopped and dug into his pouch. A startled look came into his eyes, as he pulled out a gold piece and gave it to Oelus. There had been many more gold coins in the pouch than he had now.

"I'll be damned," he whispered. "Strong-armed! And in a fly joint like that."

Oelus stared at the old piece, as though he couldn't believe his eyes.

"Gold! There was awe in his voice. "But where can I change this?"

Stumpy, hot in anger, didn't hear him. He walked out into the street and straight into trouble. His sword swinging between his legs made him stumble. He crashed with a jolt into a passing soldier, sending the other reeling.

The soldier recovered his balance and came charging up to Stumpy.

"You clumsy fool!" he raged. "What did you mean by that?"

"Aah, shut up!" yelled Stumpy still angry with himself over being clipped.

"You say that to me? To Porto, who has slain lions with his bare hands?" demanded the soldier. He looked strangely bewildered; as if Stumpy had confounded him with his daring.

"So what! I've knocked off three thousand guys, ten bulls and five fire-eating dragons," Stumpy retorted.

"Then there will be a great honor in taking your life," Porto said cheerfully,

as he drew his sword.

THERE was no escape for Stumpy this time. A crowd had gathered, attracted by the shouted boasts. They hemmed the two in closely. Stumpy saw there was no retreat, so he went for his sword also. But he had huckled his belt badly. No sooner did his fingers touch the sword hilt, than belt and all fell to the street.

A gasp rose from the crowd.

"Ooh!" groaned Stumpy as he bent to retrieve the sword. There was the whisper of steel passing over his head. Porto had swung his sword in a vicious circle, which, had it connected would have decapitated Stumpy. But Stumpy had stooped just as Porto swung and the sword found only air for its mark.

Stumpy hastily pulled the sword free, stood erect—and slipped on a wet cobble-stone. He stuck out his arm to recover balance. And Porto, losing his balance at the end of his swing, fell forward against Stumpy's arm. It was the arm which had picked up the sword.

The crowd didn't know Stumpy had slipped. They saw Stumpy apparently step forward, the sword held straight out in front of him, and thrust it into Porto's throat. A cheer went up, as Porto gurgled once and fell face forward on the cobble-stones. Then they dispersed and went about their business, as though such fights were an every-day occurrence.

Stumpy looked at the dead body at his feet and shuddered. When he saw the blood still dripping from the sword point, he almost fainted. The sight of blood had always affected him thus.

"Well, well! If it isn't Jason. At it again, eh, man?"

Stumpy turned a sickly look in the voice's direction. It was one of the two sailors with whom he'd been drinking the night before. The sailor stared at

Porto's corpse with lively curiosity.

"Whose the mug?" he asked.

"Said his name was Porto," Stumpy whispered.

The sailor whistled in surprise.

"Not the guy who kills lions with his bare hands?"

"That's what he said," Stumpy assured him.

"H'm! You're sure handy with that sticker, Jason," said the sailor.

Stumpy basked in the glow of the other's admiration.

"Oh, that wasn't so tough," he passed his deed off lightly. "Shoulda' seen what I did one night back in——"

"Look, Jason," the sailor interrupted. "I wonder if you'll do me a favor?"

"Sure, kid. What?"

"Well, I've got some friends, see? Heard about you, but never seen you. Well—I was sort of bragging you were a friend of mine and they—ah—well, they said I was lying, more or less. So if you would come down to this place with me and they saw us together——"

"Why, sure thing, fellow. Where's the joint at?"

"The Golden Boar. You remember last night?"

"Yeh! So I do. I'd like to see that waiter again, anyway," said Stumpy reflectively.

THERE was a larger crowd at the Golden Boar than on the night before. The lone waiter was kept busy running from table to table. Stumpy and his friend managed to find one near the door. As though their arrival was a signal, half a dozen sailors at a nearby table left their seats and came over to join Stumpy.

Stumpy, still in the golden glow of his new-found prosperity, invited them all to have a drink.

"Look, bud," said Stumpy to the

waiter, when he brought the drinks, "who give me the strong-arm last night?"

The waiter looked blank.

"You know: the muscle—the roll—Listen stupid! Who robbed me?"

"Master!" The waiter was injured innocence. "You were robbed? Oh! It must have been the litter bearers! I knew I should have come along."

Stumpy looked his disbelief but knew he could prove nothing. Besides, his companions were begging to hear of his exploits. Before the day was done, Stumpy had killed thousands of soldiers, hundreds of fire-eating dragons and had even confessed it was he who had committed the Saint Valentine's day murders. The last drew only blank stares. He was launched, for the tenth time, on another exploit having to do with dragons, bulls and soldiers, when one of the sailors noticed the fleece for the first time.

"Is *that* the Golden Fleece?" he asked in accents of awe.

Stumpy was beginning to feel the wine. The mention of the fleece brought something to his mind. Tears began to course down his cheeks.

"Yesh," he said dolefully, "thish ish it. An' it wash such a beautiful coat! Now look at it! Jush a rag—thash all—jush a rag."

They did their best to bring him back to good humor, but all he could say was:

"Jush a rag—thash all!"

Then one of his guests hit on an idea.

"How simple is the solution! Jason desires a coat made of the fleece. There's a tailor nearby. Let us take him there."

The tailor proved to be a wizened old man who smelled as musty as the old clothes he was sewing. He cackled in laughter when he saw the fleece.

"So!" he said, when his mad laughter

had subsided enough for him to speak. "It is our hero of the Golden Fleece. And he wishes a coat made of it. Old Irios will oblige—aye, and make a prophecy too. Whosoever shall complete the wearing of this coat for forty days and nights, shall have naught but good luck befall him from then on."

"Never mind your prophecies; Jason but wants a coat. So best get busy, old loon, else your days become shortened to seconds."

The old man cackled his appreciation of the other's wit and began to sew. His sewing was a wonderful thing to watch. The coat was ready in an hour and it fit perfectly. That, in spite of the fact he hadn't even tried on the garment for a fit. He handed the coat to Stumpy with a flourish, saying:

"Here, mighty Jason, is a coat fit for a king. Wear it for forty days and nights. Else you will need a coat of another material. And the leather from the skin of an ass makes for poor comfort."

STUMPY tossed him a gold piece, not noticing how few there were left in the pouch. Then the group returned to the Golden Boar to celebrate Stumpy's new coat.

Stumpy celebrated many times in the next month, and always at the Golden Boar. He learned the value of the gold pieces and husbanded them carefully. But despite his caution, a few goblets of wine would make him drunk enough to buy some one a drink. Especially if the other showed a desire to listen to his boasting.

In the beginning, Stumpy told his tale with some regard for the truth. But with each passing day he added some new detail: more daring, heroic doing, until in the end the garment of truth was lost beneath the embroidery of lies. Soon, too, he began to find

fewer and fewer who would listen to his imaginary heroics.

He was sitting alone one day, deep in his wine and talking aloud to himself. No one was paying any attention to him.

"So this guy comes at me, see," Stumpy recited his own praise with gestures. He had his sword out and, as he told his tale, he acted it out at the same time. "He comes at me and—wham! We're swinging with our swords. Well, this guy ain't no chicken. He's a giant, see, with three heads and six arms. But does that scare me? Hell no! I ducks the swords and gives 'em my left hook, the same one Barney Ross taught me. Only I got my trusty sticker in my meat hook. So he gets it—right in the neck. And that ended that!" He finished his tale while lying across the table where his last imaginary blow had sent him sprawling.

"Aah, shut up!" a voice bawled.

Stumpy looked up and saw it was his sailor friend.

"Hey," he called, "c'mon over and have a drink."

The sailor gave an early Greek version of the Bronx cheer.

Stumpy sadly ruminated that "nobody loves me no more." He pulled the pouch from his belt and a look of horror came to his eyes. The pouch was empty. As though he had divined what had happened, the waiter suddenly appeared at Stumpy's side.

Stumpy looked up and grinned foolishly.

"Hi, pal. Looks like I'll have to put the joint on the cuff," he said.

The waiter grinned also. But there was no humor in his grin. He stuck out his hand, palm up. Stumpy knew what that meant: pay up!

"Look, pal," he said wheedlingly, "I just found out I got the shorts. No money, see? But the next time I'm

around, I'll fix you up."

The waiter's hand pushed Stumpy back into his chair.

"So, the windbag has spent his gold, eh?"

Stumpy nodded his head.

"But he forgot to leave enough to pay for his drinks," the waiter reminded him.

"Well," said Stumpy vaguely, "you know how that is."

The waiter had only one idea and purpose. Stumpy was going to pay for his drinks. He pulled out his knife and held the point against Stumpy's throat.

"Listen, hero," he said. "There is the shop of Big Cornus close by. He is a money lender. That fine blade you carry should bring enough to pay for these drinks, and your chest armor should bring even more. Go! And do not forget to return. Else I'll come to look for you."

Stumpy understood.

IT WAS a dingy, dusty place, the pawnshop of Big Cornus. Stumpy looked at the silks and furs strewn about. In one corner was a small hill of chest armor. In another, leg armor lay neatly stacked. A little man with a flustered, bird-like manner approached him.

"Yes, yes, what can I do for you?" the little man said.

"Why—uh—I'm looking for Big Cornus," Stumpy began to explain.

"Well, I'm Little Cornus," the man broke in. "I'll do just as well."

He walked close to Stumpy and began to examine his armor and sword.

"Very nice," he said as he tapped and pulled at the armor. "Very nice. Damascus work on the sword. Good overlap on the disks. Give you two gold pieces for the armor."

"Huh?" asked Stumpy dazedly.

"Well," the other replied grumpily,

"if you think you can get more elsewhere, go ahead. But that's our limit, two gold pieces."

As though the sale was settled, he began to unbuckle the armor.

"Wait a minute," yelled Stumpy. "I want to see Big Cornus,

"My brother. Give you same thing," the little man said. Then lifting his voice, he called, "Brother! Someone to see you!"

A mountain of a man stepped through the curtains that divided the rear of the shop from the front. There was something familiar about him. His slow, deliberate walk. His slightly protruding eyes. The way his lips worked, as if he were chewing on a cud. Stumpy's eyes lit up. Of course! Big Cornus looked like Big Louie, just as Little Cornus resembled Louie's smaller brother.

"Yes, Brother?" said the man-mountain.

"He wants to talk to you. Thinks you'll give him a better price," said Little Cornus.

"And how much did you offer?"

"Two gold pieces."

"It is enough!" said the big man and, turning, went back through the curtained doorway.

Stumpy stared, his face registering his bewilderment.

"You see. Two gold pieces. No more," chortled Little Cornus as he began again to unhuckle the armor.

"Wait a minute," Stumpy begged, trying to twist away from the little man. "I wanted to talk to your brother."

"You heard what he said, didn't you?"

"Ye-es."

"So what is there to talk about?"

"Guess you're right," Stumpy sadly admitted. "All right, take this steel corset offa me and give me those gold pieces."

STUMPY walked back to the Golden Boar, richer by two gold pieces.

"Man," he reflected sorrowfully, "the way those two guys acted made me wish I was home on Clark and Van Buren Streets.

The waiter was waiting for him. Stumpy looked at the handful of coins which the waiter gave him for his gold piece.

"Is this all?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"But——" He stopped when he saw the waiter's hand reach for the ever-present knife.

"Okay, okay. Don't get excited," he said hastily, as he made for the door.

"A guy c'n ask, can't he?"

Oelus stopped him, as he started up the stairs to his room.

"Er—Jason," the innkeeper began. "I think it is time your account was settled.

"What account?" Stumpy snarled.

But Oelus was no longer frightened by Stumpy's manner.

"We-ell——" looking over the papyrus sheet on which he kept his record—"according to my figures, you owe for thirty-seven days' lodging."

"Thirty-seven days!" yelled Stumpy, returning to confront Oelus. "How do you figger that? What about that gold piece I gave you the first day?"

"Didn't I offer you change? And didn't you refuse?" Oelus reminded him.

"Yes, hut——"

"There are no buts. I want my money—now—else you must find other lodgings."

"Okay, you robber! How much?"

"One gold piece and eighteen drachmas, Master," said Oelus. His one eye gleamed in anticipation when he saw Stumpy reach for the pouch. "After all," he continued, "to one as wealthy as Jason——"

"Save it," Stumpy said sarcastically as he dumped the contents of the pouch on the counter. He had ten drachmas left, after paying the innkeeper.

"What the hell," he grumbled to himself. "Might as well hock the sword. It ought to bring something."

It did—another gold piece, which proved sufficient for a night's drinking at the Golden Boar.

The patrons of the place noticed that his sword and armor was missing. And the waiter found joy in explaining why he no longer wore them. The tale created a great deal of laughter and good-natured jibing at Stumpy's fallen estate.

"Now the mighty hero must face his dragons with his bare hands," said one.

"Pooh," said another. "What does that mean to Jason? The power of his breath will be enough to suffocate any dragon he finds."

But Stumpy remained silent to all this. He opened his mouth only to order more wine. The money he had left, lasted until dawn. Then, still silent, he paid for his drinks and left.

His mind held only one thought as he made his way to the shop of the Cornus' brothers.

"That coat! That damned yellow coat! Nothing but trouble since I got it. Well, I'm goin' to get rid of it, right now."

BIG CORNUS greeted him. He was alone but the sounds coming from behind the curtained doorway told Stumpy the little man was there.

Stumpy hemmed and hawed for a couple of seconds as he stalled for time to figure out the best angle which would get him the most money for the coat. Big Cornus looked at him suspiciously.

"Well, Jason?" What is it this time?" he asked gruffly.

"Look, Mister Cornus," Stumpy began hesitatingly, "S—uh—got tapped

down at the Golden Boar, see? I'm kinda short; broke, in fact. Well, I'd like to sort of put this in hock." He pointed to the fleece coat.

Suspicion still lurked in Big Cornus' voice:

"The Golden Fleece? Worthless! Wouldn't give more than a drachma for it!"

"A drachma!" Stumpy's voice rose in a horrified shriek. "Hell! Look what I went through to get it! Think of all the soldiers——"

Big Cornus anticipated the recital.

"Yes, yes, I know. Everybody knows—and laughs. It had value once. But now the fleece is only an object of derision. No, Jason, I can give you only a single drachma for it. And hope some farmer comes in who has not heard of it. That will be the only chance to sell it."

It was the longest speech Big Cornus ever made. The only purpose it served was to make Stumpy angry.

"To hell with you!" he snarled. "I never did business with you anyway. Where's your brother?"

The little man suddenly appeared as if he'd been waiting for Stumpy's call.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded in his usual brusque way.

Stumpy told him.

Big Cornus smiled broadly.

"I offered him a drachma," he said.

"A drachma! Too much. Should have been a mite. Never sell it if we buy," the little man said, and went back to his curtained cubicle.

Stumpy groaned in despair. But he took off the coat. A drachma wasn't much, but if he bought drinks only for himself it would last through the night.

"All right, gimmie," he said.

Big Cornus pressed a coin into his hand. Stumpy placed it in his pouch without looking at it, and went back to the Golden Boar. He didn't see Little

Cornus come out again and look at his big brother. Nor did he see the big man wink and say:

"He took it! And he didn't look."

THE WAITER noticed the coat was gone.

"Haven't much left have you, hero? Except your mouth. That should——"

"Aah, shut up!" Stumpy snarled. "Just bring me some wine."

The waiter laughed but brought the wine.

Stumpy drank far into the night. The gray of dawn was lightening the shadows when the waiter came over on his last mission.

Stumpy lifted his head from the table top. He saw the upturned palm and knew it was held that way for money.

"Jush a minute," he mumbled as he reached into the pouch for the coin. He brought it up and looked at it. Looked at it long and hard. But no amount of looking would change it. It wasn't a drachma! *It was a disk from a suit of armor!* Dimly Stumpy heard the waiter cry, "Sol! You think to cheat me!" All his senses, blurred as they were, centered on the perforated disk in his palm. It looked familiar. This figure of a ship; he had seen it before. If only he could clear his brain of this dizziness.

The voice of the waiter became a muffled sound which irritated him. He wearily lifted his head to tell him to "shut up," but the room became a gray blur in a sudden spell of dizziness. And the waiter's face, contorted in rage, seemed to tower for endless miles above him. He closed his eyes. But he could still hear the voices:

"Wake up! Wake up, you bum!"

STUMPY opened his eyes and moaned in terror. A hand was roughly shaking his shoulders. A voice was saying, "Wake up, you!"

Stumpy looked around him. He was back in Chicago—in Grant Park! The new day showed a dark gray sky. He turned his head and started in fright. A park policeman stood beside him.

"Come on, you bum. Beat it before I have you thrown in!"

Stumpy lost no time in getting on his way. He had been "thrown in" before. His room at Moe's Mansion on Van Buren Street was as damp as a jail cell, but it smelled better. For the few moments it took to get back on Van Buren Street, his mind was busy congratulating himself on his narrow escape. Then he became conscious of the smooth disk of metal still in his fist. He stopped short in puzzled bewilderment.

"Hey," he thought, "what went on back there on the bench? What'd I have—a dream?"

It had stopped snowing and the streets held a white blanket which would soon be dirtied by the early morning traffic. But he did not see the snow-covered street. The dream, or whatever it was that had happened to him, was still fresh in his mind.

"It's this damn coat," he said aloud. "As if my luck ain't bad enough, I had to cop this. Now I get nightmares from it."

He fell to examining it. The color! It was such an offensive color. He hadn't realized it before.

"Jees! What if somebody I know sees me? Holy mackerel, I'll never live it down."

Quickly he looked around to see if any of his friends were up and about. The street was deserted. Breathing a sigh of relief, he made for the nearest alley.

He was almost at Clark Street when a blinding light was suddenly thrown in his face and a voice bellowed:

"That's him! Grab him before he gets away!"

Stumpy stood stock still, frozen by fright into immobility. A half-dozen blue-clad figures converged on him. They were policemen.

POLICE Lieutenant Mark Johnson glared down into the frightened face of Stumpy Reed.

"Now look here, Reed. Why don't you stop playing dumb?"

Stumpy looked at him in frightened perplexity. He couldn't quite make out what it was all about. He had been hustled into one of the two squad cars which had been parked in the alley. From what he heard, it seemed they had been waiting there for an hour. Waiting for him!

They had brought him down to Central Station where he was thrown into a cell after they searched him. The turnkey had turned a deaf ear to all his questions. He had remained there all day. Then, early in the evening, two plainclothesmen brought him up to Lieutenant Johnson's office. There were half a dozen men there besides Johnson and the two detectives who had brought Stumpy up. Stumpy saw that Big and Little Louie, Harry from the hand laundry, and the night watchman were there. The other two men he did not know.

Johnson had been calm, at first.

"Sit down, Reed," he said, motioning Stumpy to a chair. "Now—uh—tell us what you did with the sixty grand." His tone was fatherly and confidential.

Stumpy looked up at him, wide-eyed and silent. Johnson waited for a few seconds. Then he barked:

"Well! What about it?"

"Wh-what's wrong?" Stumpy whimpered. "I ain't done nothin'."

"H'm. So breaking into the Sixth National Bank and knocking it off for sixty grand is nothing to you," Johnson said ironically.

"Me?" Stumpy breathed in astonish-

ment.

"All right! We know you weren't alone! That's what I brought you up here for. Where's the rest of the mob?"

"But, Lieutenant," Stumpy said, honestly to—"

"Aw, don't give me that innocent stuff, Reed. We got ya down," Johnson said, "Hey, you two; c'mere." He called to Big and Little Louie. "Is this your coat?" he asked.

They looked at it.

"Yes," they answered in chorus.

Johnson nodded in satisfaction.

"You," he called to the night watchman. "Is this the guy you saw in the alley?"

"Yes sir," was the reply.

"And you," he said to Harry. "Suppose you tell us about this guy."

Harry looked sorrowfully at the shrinking figure of Stumpy, cleared his throat and said:

"I forgot something one night and came back to the laundry. I found Stumpy opening the safe in the office. Said he did it to keep warm. Felt sorry for the guy." Harry shrugged his shoulders. "So that's what comes of being good to people. They turn around and rob banks. I asked him how the night watchman never caught him. He said when he heard him coming, he ducked down into the basement and up through Louie's, into the alley."

"Y'see, Reed," Johnson said amiably, "what a sucker you were? Figuring that you could get away with it."

STUMPY no longer was puzzled. He was being accused of helping in the robbery of the bank which was located next door to Louie's. And from the way things were going, Stumpy's future was to be spent behind bars. His head fell forward on his chest.

"Just one moment, Lieutenant."

Stumpy looked up. It was one of the

strangers.

"We are well aware of the excellent police work in this case. But the fact remains that sixty thousand dollars in cash is still missing. It is obvious that Reed doesn't have it. That he may know the whereabouts is problematical. We are offering a large cash reward for its recovery, Lieutenant, and it is our suggestion that speed would be the essence of the problem." He sent a meaningful glance at Stumpy.

A beautiful smile lighted the lieutenant's face.

"Take him down, boys," he jovially instructed the detectives. "I think Reed'll talk a little later."

Stumpy knew what he meant. The third degree. The cell door closed with a clatter behind the thoroughly frightened man. He sat on the hard, wooden bench in his cell and rocked back and forth in terror, waiting for the summons. He felt a chill take hold of him and he put his hands into the coat pockets. And found salvation. The disk! Maybe it wasn't a dream!

Feverishly he pulled it out and fell to examining its inscribed surface. The already familiar feelings of lassitude took hold of him. He began to feel sleepy, tired—and he closed his eyes.

STUMPY felt his feet stumble over something. He opened his eyes and gaped in amazement. He was on a rough country road. Snow, cold and damp, pressed against his thin socks. A full moon sent pale light down to make a black-and-white setting of the countryside. About a hundred yards ahead of him, set back a few feet from the road, were several buildings. Stumpy set out for the largest. He could see light gleaming from several windows.

The snow cushioned the sound of his footsteps on the porch. He could hear muffled voices within as he knocked at

the door. Silence answered his knock. Again he banged on the door with his knuckles. The answer was immediate this time. The door was flung open and a voice commanded:

"C'mon in!"

The voice sounded familiar. But that wasn't what made Stumpy obey. It was the sight of the snub-nosed automatic in the man's hand. He shied away from the gunman as he came through the door.

The three men seated about the table looked at Stumpy with interest. He returned their glances, but only for a second. Then he saw the huge pile of greenbacks on the table and his eyes bugged at the sight. He had never seen so much money before. He had a feeling—that dough—it came from the Sixth National Bank!

"Well, stupid," a voice behind him said, "what d'you want?"

Stumpy had momentarily forgotten the man who had let him in. He twisted his head around. What he said, he didn't like. There was a sardonic, evil look in the man's eyes. And the automatic was held steady, aimed at Stumpy's back.

"Guess I made a mistake," Stumpy said. His eyes went from face to face. Blank stares met his look. "Ha ha! Looks like I'm in the wrong joint."

"Yep," said the man with the gun. "It sure does! Better sit down."

Stumpy started to decline but the gun nudged him toward a chair. Stumpy sat down.

The man with the gun walked to the table and sat down also. The four sat and stared at him, steadily and silently. Somewhere a clock ticked loudly against the silence. Torturing thoughts ran riot in Stumpy's mind:

"Oh Lord, what a spot! These are the guys what took the bank. Now how did I get here? I should a gone back to the

Golden Boar. . . . That's funny. The guy with the rod looks like the waiter. Jees. I must be goin' nuts. Thinking about that waiter. Why don't I think how I'm goin' to blow this joint?"

"What are we goin' ta do with the gee, Nick?" one of the men asked. His lips barely moved over the words.

Nick, the one with the gun, shrugged his shoulders.

"Hey, boss!" yelled another, excitedly. "I know who this guy is! He's the bum what they picked up."

"What d'ya mean?"

"Sure! Get a gander at his benny. That color! Just like the papers said."

Nick looked . . . and let out his breath in a long sigh.

"You're right," he said and walked over to Stumpy. Stumpy looked up. He tried to duck, but Nick was too fast. His fist hit Stumpy on the jaw, knocking him from the chair.

Stumpy sat up and shook his head trying to clear it of the daze which clouded his senses. Blood flowed in a slow trickle from the side of his mouth.

"Wha's idea?" he mumbled thickly.

"Shut up!" Nick said quietly. "How'd you find us? Who sent you?"

SOMEHOW, the blow had driven all panic from Stumpy's mind. Anger filled his heart. Nick's words told him several things. Cunningly Stumpy played up those things.

"If you think beatin' me up's goin' to tell you how I got here——" He deliberately left the rest of the sentence hanging in the air.

Nick reached down, pulled him erect and dumped him back in the chair. He saw the stubborn glint in Stumpy's deep-set eyes and the slant of his jaw.

"Listen, jerk," Nick said tonelessly. "You got any ideas about playing cop—forget 'em! I asked you something."

Stumpy stalled.

"Okay, you got me. I knew who pulled the job the minute I lamped it. Wasn't any of my business so I scrambled. And somebody saw me. I got picked up, all right; but I managed to get away. I'm hot, and I'll get the works if they get me. So I figured might as well pack in with you guys."

Stumpy stopped short and waited tensely. Nick said:

"So? Keep talkin'."

"Huh?"

"How'd ya know we were here?"

Stumpy suddenly grinned. He realized that as long as they weren't certain whether he had been followed, he was comparatively safe.

"Don't worry," he said soothingly. "Nobody followed me. I made sure of that."

"Uh huh. Well, that's good! Because I'm goin' to take care of you," said Nick. The automatic was in his hand again.

Stumpy smiled. It wasn't a brave smile. The blood trickling from the corner of his mouth, his appearance—all bore out of the misery of the man. Yet Nick paused in whatever he had intended doing.

"What's so funny?" he asked.

"Go ahead," Stumpy taunted, "knock me off! By morning, the cops'll know who did the job and where to look for you guys."

Nick stiffened at the words. The three men at the table, interested spectators, suddenly went tense. Stumpy's life hung by a thread. He held his breath as if he were swimming under water.

The thread held. Nick relaxed.

"I get it," Nick said slowly. "You got a note stashed someplace. So what's on your mind?"

"Look." Stumpy took quick advantage of his opportunity. "I ain't got a chance. The cops got me tagged. So I

might as well throw in with you guys."

"Nix!" shouted one of the men at the table. "With that benny, he'd be a advertisement for every cop in the country. Knock him off, Nick, and let's blow."

Nick shook his head.

"Nope. Can't take a chance. Throw some rope around this bum and put him in the barn. I'll figure out the angles. We gotta get that note he left."

THEY went about tying Stumpy with an enthusiasm that boded ill for his comfort. Then they carried him out to the barn behind the house and dumped him into a pile of sour-smelling hay. They didn't see the grin on his face.

Content filled Stumpy's soul as he began to twist about in an effort to find a loose spot in the rope.

It took a lot of sweat and skin before he was free. For a second he was tempted to use the disk and go back to his cell. Instead he searched his pockets for a pad of matches he knew to be in one of them. He was right. Then he peered through the half-open barn door.

He noticed that the mob had drawn the window shades. He smiled happily. They wouldn't discover what was happening until it was too late.

He felt the hay. It was slightly damp on top. Pulling out the dry center, he spread it along the wall of the barn. Then he set fire to it!

Gleefully he watched the flames spread. They licked hungrily at the dry wood of the barn walls. In a few moments the interior was burning merrily. Already the walls were beginning to smoke, preparatory to bursting into flame.

Stumpy ran outside. He laughed aloud when he saw how rapidly the fire was gaining headway. A tongue of flame licked suddenly skyward, sending a glow into the night. Stumpy knew the

fire would attract attention. In a little while people would begin to gather, and then the bank robbers would be discovered. For once, Stumpy was smiling as he took out the disk and looked at it.

STUMPY looked up and saw he was back in the cell again. Suddenly, he was tired. Stretching out on the wooden bunk, he was soon asleep.

He was shaken out of his sleep by a turnkey, who looked at him as though seeing a ghost, and not finding the experience pleasant.

"B-better—g-g-get out," he chattered, stepping to one side. "The looney wants to see you."

The same two detectives were waiting for him when he stepped out. Carefully, as if he was something fragile, they took him by the arms.

Lieutenant Johnson glared balefully at Stumpy.

"If it isn't too much trouble, Reed," he asked sarcastically, "would you mind telling me how you did it?"

"Did what?" Stumpy asked innocently.

Johnson controlled himself with a visible effort.

"Managed to sneak in and out of a locked cell?" he thundered.

"Me? Now, Lieutenant! Somebody's givin' you a rib."

"Nobody's giving me nothing. I saw with my own eyes—you *weren't* in that cell!"

Stumpy shrugged his shoulders.

Johnson looked at him suspiciously. The whole business was beyond his understanding.

"Not that it make any difference anymore," he announced heavily. "You're free. The mob that pulled the bank job was caught, Near Woodstock. Somebody set fire to a barn next to the house they were hiding in. Cops came out

with the fire company and nabbed them. They had the dough, right there."

"That's swell!" Stumpy said enthusiastically. "Now can I go?"

"In just a minute." Johnson looked closely at him. "Would you mind answering one question, Reed?"

"Shoot."

"The gang claimed some guy in a yellow-colored sheep-skin coat bust in on them. But nobody besides the mob seemed to have seen him. They claimed they locked him in the barn. Now tell me, Reed: where did you get that cut lip and the hay sticking to your pants?"

"Oh, that," Stumpy replied airily, "I got the lip when I fell off the bench. The hay—guess I was on a hay ride."

"Um hm. Looks like you ain't gonna say nothing else."

"What else is there to say?"

"All right, Reed," Johnson said wearily. "You can go now."

STUMPY paused as he left the station, and sniffed deeply and appreciatively of the cold air. It felt good to be on the outside looking in. He turned his footsteps toward the Chicago Coffee Shop.

Questions buzzed around his head like bees, on his arrival. He had ears only for one: the bartender's query:

"Well, if it ain't my old friend, Stumpy! What'll it be?"

Stumpy settled for a gin. The next one was on the barkeep and the third was on the boss, Charley Borsh. He parried their questions as he had done the police lieutenant's.

"Look, Stumpy," a voice said. "Have a drink with the brother and me."

Stumpy turned on the bar stool. It was Big Louie. His brother was sitting alone at a table.

"C'mon, sit with us," Big Louie said. "I'd like to talk to you."

Stumpy gulped. The coat! He was still wearing it.

"Sure, Louie," he answered and sat down.

"Y'know," Big Louie said apologetically, "I'm sorry about the whole business."

Stumpy was dumbfounded. They were apologizing to *him*!

"That's all right," he answered quickly. "No harm done. And say! Here's your coat. I only borrowed it."

"Forget it Stumpy. It's yours."

"Nope. It's yours! That color's a little too strong for me."

Stumpy took it off and handed it to Big Louie, who, even as he protested, handed it to his brother. Finally the big man said:

"Well, look. How's about lettin' us show you our hearts are in the right place." He reached in his pocket for money and Little Louie said, "Sure. Here's something for you, Stumpy."

Stumpy didn't look at the coin. They left and he ordered several more gins.

He had put the coin on the table. Its surface gleamed dully in the electric light. Idly he glanced at it. It looked familiar. He picked it up and began to examine it.

That ship! Those perforations, top and bottom! It wasn't a coin. It was the disk he had found in the coat. He tried to tear his eyes from it. Already the room was beginning to swim—to spin . . .

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SCIENTIFIC

THE FRENCH FOUND AN OBVIOUSLY CITY-DWELLING INDIAN RACE LIVING IN THE FOREST AT THE MISSISSIPPI'S MOUTH



THEIR WORSHIP WAS VERY SIMILAR TO THE WORSHIP OF THE EGYPTIANS AND THE INCAS, FEATURING A SACRED FIRE



THEIR LEGENDS TELL OF THEIR MANY MIGRATIONS IN OCEANGOING CANOES, THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHICH WAS ONE OF THEIR SECRETS

MYSTERIES

THE MYSTERY OF THE NATCHEZ

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

The story of this Indian Tribe offers another question mark in the chain of mystery leading to Man's beginning

WHEN the first French arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi they found it was being occupied by a tribe of Indians known as The Natchez, who spoke a Muskogean tongue, and disclosed a system of organization more fitted for cities than for a life in the forest. In fact, although the Muskogean in general showed that they had not as yet entirely adapted themselves from city-life, The Natchez were pre-eminent in this lack of adaptation.

Together with their fellow-Muskogean, they lived in villages of log-cabin homes which had built-in beds with mattresses and other furniture. Their utensils were of a polished black pottery of every shape and size from ten gallon jugs. Their lawns were of strawberries, and their shade trees were various kinds of fruits showing long cultivation. As one reads a description of all the fruits and nuts one wonders how many of these were lost.

One of the most interesting Natchez village descriptions is that of the Temple of the Sun as given by Adair. It was built on an earthen pyramid about eight feet high, and was divided into two parts. The main vestibule consisted of the massive entrance, with its satyr-like figures carved of wood and painted in brilliant colors. This building, like their houses was fashioned of whole logs with plaster chinking, and these huge figures may have been the four Bacabs of Indian legend who are supposed to hold up the sky.

In the inner portion of the temple, protected from the view of the vulgar by a half-screen, was the Sacred "Boat of the Sun" which the priests carried before a war-party. It may be significant that a "Boat of the Sun" was an important part of the ritual of Sun-worship in both the temples of the Incas and those of Egypt.

Here in the inner portion, was also kept the "Eternal-Fire," continually attended by its own priests. Was this a forest-adaptation of the more elaborate "Virgins-of-the-Sun" attendants used by the Incas which is so reminiscent of the systems of Southern Europe used up to the time of the "Vestal-Virgins" of Rome?

The most intriguing feature of this inner sanc-

tum, however, was the records of the past which were to be read by those skilled in reading the "hieroglyphic script" carved and painted on large slabs of wood. Maddening it is today, for us to sit in our public library, and read the descriptions of this script, while we fume at the indifference of the author who neglected to copy it. Of course, the explorer couldn't have known, as we do, that during the last terrible battle with the French, and their fellow-Muskogean tribe, The Choctaw, the Flame-god which The Natchez had worshipped, would turn traitor and burn the records which were stored in their besieged stronghold. Nor could the explorer have known that the Natchez themselves, on that horrible night, would be doomed to walk the sunset-trail into the Land-Of-Shadows.

In all this darkness of mystery there is one brilliant beam of light thrown upon the past, but it is so illuminating that it floods not only the Natchez themselves, but their quarrelsome neighbors. A young Frenchman by the name of Du Pratz had won the favor of the Natchez chief and was being entertained by that worthy. The talk turned upon the past. Du Pratz was intrigued by the evidence of former greatness which he saw about him on every hand—the commodious houses, the woven clothes grown from their own plants, a "wild hemp" found in their neighborhood, the fact that there were two languages in use among them, a "vulgar" and a "court" language, the large number of domestic plants, etc. Perhaps he turned the subject upon the past. If he did, we are grateful for the result was most illuminating.

Many centuries before this night upon which the Natchez people were entertaining their pale-faced guest, Du Pratz was told they and their brother-tribes lived in a land far to the south. They had not been the original inhabitants. They had come into the land as invaders, conquering the cities of the Chichimecs, or natives of the country. These Chichimecs fled before their armies and went into the land of the northern forests.

The Chichimecs apparently were many peoples, but this was only on the surface. Though they had many different names, (totems?) they

were in reality all brothers. Thus when they were driven into the northern forests, they rested and multiplied until the day came when a great leader arose. This leader went from tribe to tribe imploring the people to follow him back into the southland where they would again win their cities.

In the meantime the Natchez had spread their Sacred Fire from city to city, and over each city ruled one of their "Great Suns." (Was not this but a sun-title for their ruler, similar to "Inca" and "Pharaoh" which had the same meaning?)

Finally the day of revenge came, even though generations had gone by and the Natchez and their brother-tribes had ruled for centuries in the new land. The army of the Chickimecs came back as they had gone—through the mountains, and fell upon the wealthy city-states of The Great Suns. City after city fell to the People (mec) of the Chee-Chee. One after another of the "Great Suns" was forced to flee with his people, and some of their most faithful slaves into the mountains. Here they readjusted themselves to a sort of wilderness existence, always hoping to be able to rally enough strength to take back their cities.

LIFE in the mountains was not easy. Game began to be scarce as the tribes of the "Great Suns" turned to the life of the hunting and hunting. Finally a great council was called. At this gathering some of the tribes spoke of migration. The Chee-chee-mecs had recovered their strength in the forests of the north. Why should they not do the same? Someone suggested that it was an unknown country. Is going there who knows what dangers they might risk? Perhaps it was better to stay where they were. One of the boldest of "The Great Suns" spoke. His people were not happy here. Game was too scarce. If some of the tribes went, there would be more food for those remaining behind. His tribe had determined to go. If the others remaining did not ever again hear from them, the silence was to be interpreted as bad—the worst news. It would mean that they had all been killed and it would be a warning to the rest of the tribes to remain. If, however, they were successful, or if they managed to barely stay alive, word would be returned of their journey, and a full report sent back on the new country.

All of the tribes prepared to help the migrating tribe construct their long ocean-going canoes. Great logs were felled, and boats constructed which would carry from fifty to one hundred rowers. The Sacred-Fire carried along with the tribe was packed in with the seeds of their domestic plants, and with fruits and nuts.

After some moons a returning canoe was sighted. The messenger told of the journey across the Southern Sea, undoubtedly the Gulf of Mexico, and the entrance up the mouth of a large river. This river had been the Mississippi. The tribes found natives in the country, but the land

was not crowded, and game was plentiful. The messenger urged more of the "Great Suns" to come to the new land.

The advice was taken and another wave of migration went forth. Again the others helped the migrating people to build their long canoes. The adventurous ones set out across the Southern Sea, into which emptied the Great River which their brother-tribe had described.

Again centuries passed. The Natchez had for a time been very happy in the mountains since the previous two waves of migration had thinned out the mountain population and hunting again became easy. But the press of their own increasing population was once more making game scarce. This time the Natchez decided to go. They tried to persuade their fellow-tribes remaining in the mountains of The Southern Land to join them. They were not very successful. Again, however, the remaining tribes helped them to build the long canoes and to pack them with provisions and the Sacred-Fire.

The Natchez set out. As the former messengers had said they found the Southern Sea not very hard to cross, and without difficulty located the wide river which had been so carefully described. They too, found the land well-provisioned with game. They too, dispatched messengers, not once but many times, urging the remaining "Great Suns" to bring their tribes into this new land. The last time the messenger brought back a final answer. "We are now happy here. Game is plentiful. We have decided after a long council to remain in this land forever."

WHEN the Natchez had arrived, their brother-tribes had spread long before, far into the forest. Now the remaining tribes had decided to remain, and that is how the "Great Suns" who carried the Sacred-Fire had spread over thousands of miles, scattering and mingling with the natives.

One wonders as one reads this story, if the Chee-chee-mecs were the Tiger tribes of the Quichi? They came down from the north under their great leader, Nima-Que-Chi, working their way by the mountains, where for some time they waylaid travelers before actually attacking the lowlands cities.* Yet here in the words of their ancient enemies is the first hint that they originally owned the land.

The next question naturally concerns the unstated origin of the Natchez and their brother-tribes of "Great Suns." One can almost be certain from this account that they did not come down from the north because if they had they would not have been unacquainted with the southern country. Furthermore, they were apparently aware of the art of building ocean-going migrating canoes. Perhaps it had never been lost from the time of their first invasion. But from whence had they come?

*Quichi Annals—Author

In this detective game covering millenniums of forgotten history the clues are the plants and the languages. And the pity of it all is that we know too little of either for a fair discussion of the subject. Volumes of research remains to be done before we can even suggest the original direction of the Natchez invasion.

It is true that philologists are now beginning to suspect a connection between the languages of the Iroquois, Siouan, Caddoan and Muskogean but the language separation shows many centuries have passed since the tribes first drifted apart. In fact, a thousand years is considered to be far too conservative as they are more distantly separated than the Aryan tongues of Europe. Yet we know so little about Central American and Mexican tongues as yet, and almost nothing about the possible comparisons.

As for the plants, won't some enterprising student taking botany try to run down the ancestry of the paw-paw and particularly the "Chickasaw Plum," which Muskogean have claimed, according to Adair, were brought by "their ancestors, with them from South America?"

Sometime we may know more of the direction which this migration of the Fire-worshippers took when they wrested the Chee-Chee-Mec cities away from their former owners so many centuries ago. But today, as we go through

these precious old books "On Reserve" at many of the larger public libraries we can at least be grateful that the old explorers noted as much as they did before the records of that migration, written in the "hieroglyphic script", were burned when the Chocklaw and French stormed the last stronghold of the now extinct Natchez, and killed the last of their "Great Suns."

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CAN FIGURES BE FASCINATING?

By J. P. KAYNE

THERE was a time when, a science fan since early boyhood, I thought of mathematics as a very dull subject indeed, preferring Jules Verne and popular science articles and books which, I felt, imposed little strain on my thinking powers. It took some twenty years of general science reading to awaken me to the fact that thinking for its own sake can be as exciting as reading science fiction. This was when I tumbled to the fact that mathematics, of the more simple kind, of course, can really be fascinating when applied to various problems of science.

Here is a prime example. There is a simple method by which the volume and diameter of a water molecule may be figured out. It turns out that in an ounce of water there must be a quantity of molecules which would be expressed by the figure 1 followed by 24 zeros.

Such a fact seems meaningless by itself, until we begin to do a little figuring of our own. Thus, a couple of years ago, just from curiosity, I weighed off a small fraction of a gram of white sugar. One gram is about 1/20th of an ounce, so a small gram fraction would be a small amount indeed, but the point was that I wanted to count the grains. Looking at them through a magnify-

ing glass I found they varied considerably in size, but by weighing and counting several very small lots I was able to satisfy myself that a guess of about 10,000 grains of sugar per gram might not be out of line for my purpose.

Now there are a million grams in a metric ton which is equivalent to 2200 lbs. On the above basis, a metric ton would contain 10,000 million grains of sugar. The latter would make a figure with 10 zeros. Subtracting this from 24 we get 14 which means that the quantity we are after is 10 to the 14th power, just as 100 is 10 to the 2nd power. What all this means, then, is that if we could imagine each of the molecules in one ounce of water expanded to the size of a tiny grain of white sugar, the quantity would be 100 million million metric tons.

Again, all this might seem incomprehensible, but wait a minute. Sugar is a pretty precious commodity these days with a ration of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. per week, per capita, or 26 lbs. per year. Let us assume an overall consumption for all purposes of a little less than twice this amount, or 50 lbs. per capita. Multiplying by 130 million persons in the U.S.A., we get 6,500 million pounds per year. Dividing this by 2,300 lbs, we get roughly

(Concluded on page 209)

REPORT FROM THE

OUR ALPHABET TELLS A STORY!

Sirs:

Our alphabet is a construction of logic symbols designed to defeat a vast dark age of submergence of the intelligence of man until some day man might so recover by adaptation to this planet that he could recognize his source. So profound is this message across over fifty thousand years that it was made so gaps that might occur in the message could be reconstructed by logic and sequence. What the solution will lead to in concealed messages and stories of things that were is yet to be discovered. I am enclosing my discovery that the alphabet is in fact the history of man. Thus, it can be checked and corrected.

A—Animal—Symbol of two-footed animal.

B—Born or is—Symbol of pregnant woman. Outline of breasts and belly.

C—Sees—Symbol of snake rising to look, or outline of head with eye opening complete with eyebrows.

D—Degenerative, danger or death—Symbol of bent back and cane—senility—disintegration.

E—Changes, moves—Symbol of energy, man putting forth with head, feet, hands.

F—Potency—Symbol of sex.

G—Generate, create—Symbol of sacrifice on altar, including knife. Release spirit.

H—Body, human—Symbol of two-legged animal with arms upraised.

I—Self—Symbol of man standing upright, one individual.

J—Young, or junior—Symbol of child with arms raised, legs not functioning.

K—Spirit, motivating—Symbol of dancing individual.

L—Life, live—Symbol of man sitting with legs straight before him.

M—Male—Symbol of male mating.

N—Knows, traceable—Symbol of knowledge, i.e. picture of man with train or long cape followed by servant. Noble of known lineage, to know source of.

O—Source—Symbol of orifice, also may be disc of planet from which man came, dual meaning.

P—Power—Symbol of man with big chest. Powerful, capable of.

Q—Seeks—Symbol of head with tongue hanging out. To run and look for indefinitely. To get tired so that tongue hangs out. Symbol of one who has sought.

R—Bad, dangerous—Symbol of powerful chested individual advancing.

S—Slow, snake—Symbol of snake used to indicate slow.

T—Gives—Symbol of man giving with both hands.

U—You—Symbol of man pointing with both hands to you.

V—Sex mate—Symbol of invitation, accessibility.

W—Woman—Symbol of female mating. (Mayan)

X—Conflict—Symbol of crossed weapons or wrestlers opposed.

Y—Why—Symbol of upraised hands appealing for an answer.

Z—Banished, reduced to nothing—Symbol of kneeling slave with arms straight forward and palms and fingers down as with bound wrists. Captive. No status. Zero future.

Read from A to Z to get story of man's origin remarkably similar to biblical history of Adam made from a lump of clay (radioactive ore are generally in clay form).

Animal born sees approaching death, changes potency (causes mutation with a lump of clay, radioactive ore), creates human creature (capable of lifting his arms above his head) from himself. This young (spirited) life is male and short-lived, and knows (realizes) its source, then seeks bad (immoral, enemy) snake which gives him a mate (i.e. implies that mutation was created for a specific purpose—to overcome death?—but was not intended to reproduce). Woman made from bad snake (by means of man's knowledge of the process). Conflict in the garden of life due to challenge by the new form of life, which though short-lived is spirited and fights. To keep peace between opposed factions in paradise, it was necessary to exile man since his creators made him for a definite purpose and would not allow his extinction, thus his banishment from the garden.

Animal-born-sees-danger-changes-potency-generates-human-(from) self-young-spirit-(motivates this) life-(which is) male-(and) knows-source-(has) power-seeks-bad-snake-(who) gives-you-sex mate-woman-(who causes) conflict-(which

Due to the unusual and significant developments that have come out of the stories of Lemuria begun in our March issue, this new department will give you a full report each issue until further notice. Can you add to this report?

FORGOTTEN PAST?

is) why- (you are) banished.

This language code is one of the biggest things that has as yet happened, as it was intended for those whose intelligence was equal to the challenge. With this knowledge examine ancient legends and get more details of past history. Evidently merely letting man know whence he came is not all that was intended. Rather it is something extremely important, as after a great lapse of time there will be great danger or a great opportunity to go back to the "garden of life."

Nathan Carver

Reaction Research Laboratories of America,
23 Melrose Terrace,
Long Branch, N. J.

This is indeed an important discovery concerning the real meaning behind our alphabet (which it is now revealed in many thousands of years more ancient than the Greek alphabet). It gives us the story of the creation of Adam and Eve and the reason for their banishment—and also predicts a reason for our salvation and thus a future important development to come.

Churchward definitely proved that Adam and Eve were created more than fifty thousand years before the destruction of the continent Mu (which is not to be confused with Mr. Shaver's Lemuria which is the Earth itself), when he showed that the Greek alphabet (re-arranged 9000 years ago as a monument to the revered dead of the Mu catastrophe) tells the story of the destruction of Mu in one night with the loss of its 64,000,000 inhabitants. Now, this revelation that our alphabet tells in an identical way, the story of Adam and Eve, places the origin of our alphabet as previous to the Greek. One more proof is thus added that Mr. Shaver's alphabet is the key to the mother tongue of all Earth languages.

Our readers have tested the Shaver alphabet in no less than thirty different languages, with an amazing result. (Some of those reports are published herewith; others were published in our paper in recent issues.)

As Mr. Carver (who incidentally was the first man in America to pilot a rocket ship) points out, using Mr. Shaver's alphabet as a key, the hidden meanings of many ancient writings can be discovered. It seems a hint that perhaps other, or all alphabets tell stories which their creators didn't want forgotten. Do any of our readers have knowledge of such meanings? If so, communicate them to this column.

As an important fact, Churchward also proved that the Biblical flood occurred many thousands of years previous to the destruction of Mu, and is not to be confused with that disaster. This gives us an amazing, and obviously more true, date for the happenings told by Mr. Shaver in

his first story. The Titans left the Earth before Adam and Eve, and thus it could not have been 12,000 years ago (the date of the Mu catastrophe) but at least 62,000 years ago! We will present other letters in an attempt to justify this statement further on in this department.—Ed.

VOICE OF THE TURTLE?

Sirs:

Briefly, we are two boys, 12 and 16. We had a pet turtle which died, and of which we had been very fond. After it died, we heard, in our minds, a voice which we believe to be that of the turtle, and it has told us many things, among them the alphabet of the language of Lemuria of Mr. Shaver. We are enclosing our dictionary of Lemurian words. But we have something else to tell.

The following is recorded in the *Scientific American* Sup., 7-2712, Oct. 1824: "At five o'clock, on the morning of Oct. 20, 1824, a light was seen upon the dark of the moon by Gruthuisen. It disappeared. Six minutes later it appeared again; and then flashed intermittently until 5:30 AM when sunrise ended the observation."

From the *Annals of Philosophy*, 26-338, Jan. 1825: "And upon Jan. 22, 1825, again shown out the star-like light of Aristarchus, reported by the Rev. J. B. Emmett."

Nature, May 25, 1893: "A letter from Captain Charles J. Norcock, of H. M. S. *Caroline*: That, upon the 24 Feb., 1893, at 10 PM, between Shanghai and Japan, the officer of the watch reported some 'unusual lights.' They were between the ship and a mountain. The mountain was about 6,000 ft. high. The lights seemed to be globular. They moved, sometimes massed, but sometimes strung out in an irregular line. They bore northward until lost from sight. Duration two hours. The next night the lights were seen again. They were, for a short time eclipsed by a small island. They bore north at about the same speed and direction of the *Caroline*. But they were lights that cast a reflection and there was a glare upon the horizon under them. A telescope brought out but a few details: that they were reddish; and seemed to emit a faint smoke. This time the duration was seven and a half hours."

Report of Captain Castle, H. M. S. *Leander*, in the same locality and about the same time: "Saw lights. Altered course and made for them. Lights died before ship, or at least, moved higher in the sky."

We asked the turtle what all this meant. This is what he told us:

"The white race of the moon, especially a democratic nation, Tanla, found wars had nearly rendered the moon uninhabitable (origin of the craters?). They decided to invade earth, and

chose China, so named by them, as their first point of occupation. They planned there to build the great weapons that could not be transported from the moon. But the expedition was entirely discouraged to find nothing to use in building these weapons. Having destroyed their spaceships to avert suspicion, they locked their plans up, for good.

"Centuries later a second expedition came, took Japan from the Ainu Tribes. They became the present day Japs. They signaled to the moon that they had prepared an operating space, then walled Japan from the rest of the world for two centuries, not letting any foreigner enter, or any native leave, under penalty of death.

"Meanwhile, the first expedition's peoples had become the Chinese, and become peaceful. They learned of the Japs and their plans and tried to circumvent them.

"The Japs were building their secret weapons in Korea, and the Chinese tried to destroy them. Japan finally was forced to promise the Chinese that they would abandon their plans, destroy their weapons before the Chinese would tell the world of their plans to conquer it. However, the Chinese would not have told, because they had sworn to the Sacred Dragon never to reveal the secret of their origin.

"Japan did not keep her promise. In 1915 and later, the moon sent light signals to Japan to inform them they had found a way to send weapons from the moon. They sent these ships, which were observed by Earthmen. It was around this time that Japan was closed to the outside world.

"In 1941 this plan was given to the holy Emperor of Japan by the warlords. 'Oh holy emperor, the Americans are industrial geniuses. If we reveal our super weapons to them at Pearl Harbor, they will capture some and build them on a much greater scale than we can withstand. Therefore we must make them think we are weak. We will not invade the Hawaiian Islands or California as planned. We will merely attack Pearl Harbor. We will not use our main industries for building modern war weapons, but rather our super-weapons which we will not use until we have enough positively to conquer the world. Of course the modern weapons we do use will not be a product of our best materials, but we will have to get along with these until we are ready.

"Remember the Huns, those terrible yellow men who ravaged the Earth, long ago, and no one knew who they were, or where they came from? Remember Ghenghis Khan? Remember Pearl Harbor!

"We will defeat the Japanese this time, but will suffer another, infinitely greater sneak attack after the war. The Japanese invaded Cambodia by the thousands. The Cambodians outnumbered them greatly, but could not withstand the few but deadly weapons. Overnight half of the Cambodians were sent back to the moon, the other half was forced to dig underground caverns where

they could manufacture super-weapons secretly. Underground in Cambodia and in Korea today, these tremendous factories exist, preparing for the conquest of the world.

"America, beware!"

Wesley & Bruce Herschensohn,
20616 Kinnard Avenue,
West Los Angeles 24, Cal.

We have reproduced here but a few of the more than 40 pages of information of dozens of types sent us by these amazing youngsters (who bear voices just as Shaver did, and as many of our readers tell us they do!). Frankly, we have reproduced the most lurid, the most fantastic, the best suited for this magazine, but the two boys have submitted serious theories on such subjects as the nature of the universe, mental telepathy, racial memory, the creation, i.e., chemistry, electronics, etc. that have astounded us. It would be impossible to reproduce them all, but we do ask our readers to consider the portion we have published, with all its amazing "revelations", and we wonder very much if anything at all can be corroborated to an even greater extent than these brilliant boys have done! Meanwhile, we thank them for all the things they have told us in support of Mr. Shaver's story and the science it contains, especially concerning racial memory, the alphabet, and the mechanisms of the Titans and Atlans.--Ed.

I REMEMBER LEMURIA!

Sirs:

I am one of the few who read *AMAZING STORIES* in Costa Rica. I've only the two magazines featuring "Star Base X" and "I Remember Lemuria!" I'll speak about the latter, for

I also remember Lemuria!

The whole thing started some four years ago, when I got a book called in Spanish "El hombre, de donde y como vino, a donde va" by the late Charles Leadbeater. (I don't know the English name of the book, but it is a translation from this language.) In this book Mr. Leadbeater speaks about the History of Man, and, slowly, I began to remember something!

Could Lemuria be Atlantis? This is a very important question to me, and may be stated in this other way: Was the continent that Mr. Shaver remembers situated in the Pacific, near Australia, or in the Atlantic? Could it be situated in the Atlantic?

I believe that Lemuria went to Kingdom Come not thousands of years, but hundreds of thousands of years ago. And 12,000 years ago there was a fight between "evil" and "live" in Atlantis.

Gravity being a push rather than a pull impressed me deeply and I'll enjoy studying it mathematically. But I can't make up my mind to the idea of a space ship going with speed greater than light, because I believe in Relativity.

About Mantong, I believe that is very far from perfection. For instance, take the letter L, that is thought to mean LIFE. But LIFE in Spanish

is VIDA, pretty different from LIFE. V (VI) for vital may mean "that is necessary to life" and you'll have Vida. In English, LIFE, sounded laIV. You also have LIVE, which sounds lIV!

But the investigations of the influence of Mantong in the Spanish must be made in the mother tongue of the Romances, the Latin. If you find that Latin accords, you can, with little changes, make accord Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian and even Rumanian. I'll give an example:

M—Means Man in Lemurian. Was probably pronounced

M'O because of the inclination of Man to "open" consonants. By the Law of Phonetic Equilibrium, it becomes

OMO plus some non-important orthographic changes, gives

HOMUS which is Man in Classic Latin, or Sermo Eruditus. Homus was spelled

HOMO (1) in the idiom of the soldiers that spread the Roman Empire, the Sermo Rusticus, that gave origin to the neo-latin languages, and we have

OME or OMNE in ancient Spanish. In the evolution of the Spanish it becomes

OMRE by the Spanish Phonetic Law of "dismilacion", and

OMBRE because the "explosion" of the occlusive letter R produced an "epentesis", and at last

HOMBRE the modern Spanish word for Man. In Spanish the letter H has no sound.

From (1) we have also:

HOMI—Man in Italian,

HOMME—Man in French, and

OMO—Man in Portuguese.

I dare to ask you to report to Mr. Shaver because I can see that you are deeply interested in this subject; you are the first editor I remember adding 37 notes! I am an amateur of Mathematics and would like to discuss the scientific side of his theories with Mr. Shaver.

Fernan Rodriguez,
Apt. 357, San Jose,
Costa Rica.

Mr. Rodriguez, why not take all your examples and apply the Shaver Alphabet to them? We would get: M-man; M'O-man source; OMO-source man source; HOMUS-human source man you ran; ROMO-human source man source; OME-source man energy; OMNE-source man seed energy; OMRE-source man horror energy; OMRE-source man be horror energy; HOMBRE-human source man be horror energy; HOMI-human source man I; ROMME-human source man man energy; OMO-source man source.

When you read those again, are you not struck with the legend of man's creation from a (radio-active) clay? Man, it would seem, was created by using the horrible radioactive energy found in the earth and in the sun.

Regarding Mu and Atlantis, or Atlantis, why don't you get Mr. Chavichov's marvelous books, "Lost Continent of Mu", "Children of Mu", and

"Sacred Symbols of Mu"? I am sure you will find your mysterious memories fully told therein. I am equally sure that you will be amazed that your mind has somehow retained the memory of Atlantis and that your insistence on the difference in time is correct!

As for discussing things with Mr. Shaver, you must realize that we have received many hundreds of communications and that such discussion with all would be impossible. However, by following this magazine faithfully, you will be able to gather gradually all of the information that is turned up about these matters.—En

IN SUPPORT OF SHAVER

Sirs:

Subject: Proofs in fact of some claims in science made in the story "I remember Lemuria!" (invented earlier by Nathan Carver).

Introduction: Invented and flew first successful rocket airplanes at Greenwood Lakes, New York and New Jersey in 1936, but that this flight is sometimes mistakenly attributed to a Mr. Willey Ley due to the fact that stamps were sold in his name for this flight. Letters to editors of Popular Aviation (now Flying), a Ziff-Davis publication covered this point, including pictures and proof. Many other basic scientific activities include an experiment to verify a Gravitic theory which ended successfully in May, 1939 in a lecture and demonstration before the American Rocket Society at the Engineering Societies Building, New York City, where was shown one facet of proof of a unified field theory there expounded and in the demonstration an apparatus showed a movement due to gravity apparatus in a horizontal plane.

Proof: Proof of either the veracity of the subject story of inherited memory, or of cleverness, is held in my publication of an extremely condensed field theory explaining gravity in "Astronautics", a publication of the American Rocket Society of New York City. This was published in April, 1940. The sixteenth page, first column, first lines of which article I will copy here for your interest. You should at once see the exact similarity of the two theories, mine and that of Richard Shaver, as related to gravity. Except where in the story he calls "end" the gravity producing substance I call "electrostatic."

Copy of part of Nathan Carver's theory of gravity. All rights reserved: "Gravity is a push, not a pull, of static repulsion from space charges outside the planet.

"The absorption of static space charges by cold or relatively cold matter produces that unbalance of static repulsion charges that results in a pressure movement back toward matter. This phenomenon we know as gravity. The larger the sphere of matter, the greater the absorption rate and pressure unbalance gradient, as there is more space charge absorbing matter back of each unit of surface.

"Mutual attraction between two bodies in space

may be likened to two sponges submerged in water; as they absorb water they are pushed toward each other. This is due to their absorbing some of the water pressure between them and the action of the unbalanced pressure surrounding them."

My analysis of the story reveals a story within a story, all of which seems to check at least with my own surmises such as "The Missing Link" will always be missing because man originated on another planet. That wars are now started by H or higher intelligences to keep the human race submerged in his own ocean of air. That any Rocket Ship finally reaching space will be blasted or caused to fail by clever hypnotic means. That verification of other intelligences has come to me in telepathy experiments where the experimenter was myself. My theory of telepathy will bow you over, by the way.

You might check the language of Lemuria against the Mayan vocabularies published by Ripley some time ago which purported to be the story of the inundation of Atlantis from A to Z. Literally, our alphabet is supposed to be the story of submersion of Atlantis.

There is a slip in the story "I Remember Lemuria" where our returning hero comes home to Dad and Mom where he is supposed to be a synthetic mutant.

Nathan Carver,
23 Melrose Terrace,
Long Branch, N. J.

We have quite a few letters from readers who insist that Shaver is right and that Gravity is a push, and not a pull. We are very hopeful of being able to demonstrate this mathematically before long, but we are very much interested in your mechanical proof. Could you supply details? Or the time of the publication in which the demonstration is explained? Your comments on higher intelligences who wait to blast us back to Earth if we attempt to leave it sounds fantastic, or it would if that statement hadn't come to us from so many other sources, and is borne out by the records from as far back as ancient Mu (in the Pacific) and the days of Adam and Eve, as much as five hundred centuries before that! More will be said about this, if space allows, and certainly in future issues. We would be interested in knowing why you say it! Also that telepathy revelation of yours. From new information we've received, it may be possible to build a "teling" such as Mr. Shaver's stories describe. At least, your editor could use one in a poker game very handily! You may be a bit confused in your memory of the Mayan vocabularies. They tell the story of the destruction of Mu, and they are not our alphabet, but the Greek. See Churchward's "Lost Continent of Mu". Our own alphabet's story is the one you yourself sent us (our apologies, a glance at the dates of your two letters shows that letter was written after this one, which constitutes a correction on your own part.) No, that wasn't a slip in the story. Muton Mfon was

a CULTURE man, not a mutant, nor synthetic. He had a mother and father, but his development was "cultured" by applications of rays, surgery, and nutrients in the food supply. Therefore, he did return to his Mom and Dad.—En.

DISAGREEMENT, BUT—

Sirs:

Actually, all science is "science fiction" to the research type of mind. Demonstrable facts are just that. The rest is THEORY . . . science fiction upon which we string the demonstrable facts like beads that the mind may more readily grasp groups of such facts and their apparent relationships. It is this factor of mental convenience that justifies the insistence of the academic world that the young squirts grasp the idea as well as the facts as part of their education. It is unfortunate that such an approach all too often inoculates the viewpoint that the theories are facts! In your case, this applies to your idea that "The stars are suns disintegrating to beat the very devil." MAYBE! After all, that is THEORY . . . NOT demonstrable fact.

Don't misunderstand me. I am an old man. I am not sure . . . any more . . . that I know anything. I merely wish to point out that theory is an observation tower man constructs to view the phenomena of reality.

Modern mathematical research has tended to break down the concept that stars burn or disintegrate.

Personally, I am inclined to the theory that stars and in fact all the tangible phenomena of reality are produced by two forces that intersect at right angles. It leads to some odd conclusions. For instance it leads to a disagreement with Newton and his idea of gravity. In such a view, the CAUSE of space would PUSH things down to earth—or to express it another way—the CAUSE of space would TEND to expel matter. This would account for the propulsion of the electron . . . its EXPULSION is the phenomenon of the electric current.

All this, indirectly due to your gentleman who "remembers" Lemuria. It so happens that I have always had the fixed idea I not only "remembered" Atlantis, but that I AM Atlithee. I THINK . . . I was a technician of ancient Atlantis. I do not hold with Jung's idea of "collective unconscious" or a sort of "well of collective racial memory." I hold the theory of personal, individual reincarnation.

The trouble with reincarnation is that it isn't demonstrable. I mean . . . I can't do it over again and let you watch.

So . . . I "remember" so many things . . . that PERSONALLY the acceptance of the idea of reincarnation is the more comfortable and practical standpoint.

Mostly these memories are of a technical nature. When you forecast publication of technical data by a gentleman who "remembers" Lemuria, my attention is caught with a definite snap.

We disagree on the concept of time-interval. Your Lemurian says 12,000 years. Personally, I wouldn't know. Nor have I ANY basis upon which to argue a time-interval since Lemuria was. My own personal impression concerning Atlantis and time-interval is wide open on one end. I mean that I can only say "OVER 30,000 years."

My name, Jhetong ko Tai, I still remember. Fact . . . or whacky fancy? I wouldn't know!

You are a remarkable editor, in that academic training has failed to case-harden your mental concepts. I would not be surprised if the vital scientific contributions of "tomorrow" were made by boys and girls who read science fiction today—simply because of its functioning as a means to preserve uninhibited speculative thought. Could be . . . your work is as vital as any college president who heads a dignified academic institution. All thinking begins with IF . . . and you keep the IF alive.

George A. Foster
P. O. Box 300,
Stoughton, Mass.

You will pardon us, George, for using a personal letter in this department, but we feel that it is justified in the light of your "memory" of the past, which has suddenly become such a vitally important factor to us and our readers. Perhaps some of those IFS you speak of can be turned into DEMONSTRABLE FACTS if we can dig down to the bottom of this amazing new (or amazingly old!) well of . . . theory? F I—Ed.

STRANGE ANSWER TO STRANGE QUESTION

Sirs:

You might be interested to know I have received amazing answers to my oft-repeated question: "What do you know of the caves?"

One old man who once lived in Baja, California, seemed quite perturbed when I asked him, and rushed down a side street and out of sight, casting uneasy glances at me over his shoulder.

Robert L. Tanner
235 8th St. N.E.
Washington, D. C.

This is interesting to know, Mr. Tanner, and it might interest you to know that some very weird experiences have been listed by other readers who have done the same thing.—Ed.

MONSTER IN A CAVE!

Sirs:

You asked for stories that might relate to Lemuria or the caves. My mother was told this story by an old man who said it was as true as truth itself:

This man and a friend went hunting, agreeing this time to go to a portion of the woods to which they did not normally go. They saw a deer and gave chase. It jumped through a clump of bushes and they followed—to find themselves unaccountably in the strangest surroundings. They were in a huge cavern that had numerous passageways

leading from it. Before them was a monster-like man they thought sure was the Devil himself. The monster stared, and the two men stared back. One of them fainted from fear, and the man who told my mother the story dragged the other away in panic, and as he did so, found himself just as mysteriously in the forest again. The old man's friend died a week later as a result of the shock he had suffered. The old man tried later to find the cave again, but failed. I know this story is true because my mother does not tell fairy tales and because she believes it.

Jerry LaPriore
2024 Pleasant St.
Fall River, Mass.

This is certainly an amazing story—and it seems to be a counterpart of many such stories testified to by many people through the ages. We confess that it may have a significance in relation to Mr. Shaver's story, but we refer you to the story in this issue for a possible clarification of that connection.—Ed.

THE "AR" SYMBOL

Sirs:

Here are a few words that I have tried to decipher from Mr. Shaver's alphabet. I am especially interested in the "AR" symbol of danger. I have noticed that many things concerning war and fighting have the two letters:

War, warrior, army, military, arms, armor, artillery, arrows, barb, dart, spear, barrage, barracks, chariot, board, guard, march, harbor, embark, mar, char, warp, sear, jar, warn, bark, roar, harik, ward, retard, charm, arson, arsenic, sharp, carnivorous, arena, marsh, park.

All of these words have a danger connotation. Other words with R in them that seem to belong to this classification are:

Sword, dagger, feet, port, powder, escort, burn, bury, injury, horror, terror, murder, torture, capture, danger, forest.

The names of some animals seem to work out into meaningful phrases, using the alphabet. The owl, because of its stern appearance, is often regarded as an old wise bird. O—source, W—will (or wisdom), L—life. Therefore: owl is "source of the wisdom of life."

Woman seems to mean "willed source of man." Mujer, the Spanish word for woman is mu-h-cr. In his stories, Shaver seems to suggest that mu is the Lemurian word for mother, therefore major means "mother-human-to-be."

See apparently means "sun-energy." This suggests light, instead of sight. Ven (I see, in Spanish) means "vital—energy—source." This also suggests light.

The word "God" at first puzzled me since it means "Generated source of de (or evil)." I noted that the alphabet worked 75% of the time in German, so I tried it in that language. "Gott" means "generated source of integral energy" but since German is more guttural than English, we changed the "tt" to a softer "d" and therefore the word is

mis-deciphered in our language.

Arthur J. Cox
435½ Hartford Ave.
Los Angeles, Calif.

It was just such significant features as this that originally sold us on Mr. Shaver's alphabet and led to his sensational stories.—Ed.

EXCERPT FROM 9-PAGE LETTER!

Sirs:

I read Mr. Shaver's story. I enjoyed it. Further on I read with what I can only describe as stupefaction his exposition of "the Language of Lemuria," and your whole-hearted acceptance of it. This is my contribution, along with those of all the rest, and in writing it we have to assume that all this theory is very serious—otherwise I would not get any fun out of considering it!

First, as to my qualifications: I have had some fifteen years or so of study in the field of comparative linguistics—at the University of Virginia, principally, but also at the University of Michigan and on my own.

It is surprising that Mr. Shaver finds 26 letters in the Lemurian, at least, whereas when it first appeared on the far, dim horizon the original alphabet we use today possessed only 22 letters. Some of these have dropped out, but others, such as I and J, U and V, Theta and X have split up from original units, to bring the count to our present English 26, although the number differs.

Also, I might mention that the high percentage of his letters which he finds to "fit into" other languages might result from the simple fact that there are only so many language sounds possible, and 26 is a high proportion of them. However, his alphabet does not even fit English with any degree of accuracy, since English has more vowels than Mr. Shaver allows for, and several more consonants. (You must not confuse the written letter with the spoken sound.)

(The editors have briefed this letter very much, since much of it is predicated on our personal editorial error in assuming that the language was phonetic rather than written, which did much to confuse Mr. Janney.)

Mr. Shaver's contempt for the basic history of his vocabulary is startling. He neglects completely the fact that every word in the English language has changed tremendously both in spelling and in pronunciation and often in meaning. Merely going back to Old English, several hundred years (1000 A.D.) let us take his own "Lemurian" words and analyze them:

(The editors reproduce only one here.) LADY—Lay de. (Alay depression; complimentary term.)

All Mr. Shaver has to do is to go through the English language punning furiously and he will have hundreds of "useable" Lemurian roots. Yet if he were to look in even so abridged a work as Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, he would find that this word did not spring full fledged as l-a-d-y from the Lemurian consciousness and remain

involute until he came along 12,000 years later! Hardly so. Even so recently as Old English times we find the word in a very different form—*hlaf-dige*. This word was undoubtedly the result of the union of two others. One was *hlaf*, "loaf", and the other was probably a root allied to the Gothic *alga*, "knead." A lady was a loaf-kneader. This certainly allayed the depression of her men-folks, but that fact does not appear in the term.

W. L. Janney,
Rt. 3, Box F-30,
Orlando, Florida.

We hope you'll pardon our "murder" of your tremendous letter, but actually, you helped clarify the situation immensely. You may remember we urged that the alphabet be tried on "root" words. Your letter substantiates that opinion. Take the word you analyzed "lady," and let's see what the root word comes to, using Shaver's alphabet. HLAFDIGAN. H-human; L-life; A-animal; F-fecund; D-detrimental; I-I; G-generate; A-animal; N-need. "Human life animal(s) fecund(ity would be) detrimental (destroyed, lost? if) I (did not) generate animal (his) seed." In other words, a lady is one without whom the human animal's fecundity or ability to reproduce would be lost if she were not present to generate, or incubate, his seed. We hold no brief for Mr. Shaver's translation because we saw from the beginning that although his memory (or whatever it was) was good, but his applications were weak. If we could publish one percent of the letters we've received from people who did their thing right, you'd be right with us on the ball! It was another error of ours in assuming, since Shaver's definitions seemed not to fit very well, that the alphabet was phonetic and not literal. We were wrong, and just as every portion of an ancient hieroglyph has a definite meaning (a rule which even Churchward chooses to ignore on occasion) every letter in a root word has a meaning; and what are letters, actually, but streamlined glyphs?—Ed.

A MYSTERY EXPLAINED?

Sirs:

Let me say that the Shaver "memories" are stupefying in their implications. I am not saying that "I Remember Lemuria!" is true in every word; yet I would be a fool to deny something that explains quite a few things that have puzzled mankind in general and scientists in particular. So, let us say that with regard to Lemurian sciences Shaver has a very good memory.

I have deduced that, before our present civilization not one, but two great civilizations lived and died. I refer to James Churchward's books, "Lost Continent of Mu," "Children of Mu," and "Sacred Symbols of Mu," referring to a civilization which existed after Shaver's Lemurian culture and yet before ours. I will refer to this civilization later on.

To continue, I think Shaver has explained something that all the scientists of the world have been

unable to. This is the mystery of how a comparatively "young" star like Sirius can have an "old" white dwarf for a companion. Shaver's solar origin theory explains such cases as this. Before continuing this, it might be interesting to note that some scientists have come out with a daring theory which states that the white dwarf suns are older than the galaxies of our universe.

Things would probably be clearer if I put the facts and theories into a little storyette titled "The Story of Sirius."

Ages ago, in the Universe-That-Existed-Before-Ours, there was a blazing, monstrous sun, a sun with a planetary system, in which one of the planets must have been about five times the size of Jupiter. On this planet, Sirius, grew luxuriant forests and jungles, which through the ages formed coal seams which eventually became so thick that the planet became a solid mass of carbon, down to the original core, which was of metal.

As the ages went by, the primary sun radiated away its mass, until its mass began to approach that of its planet. Consequently the planet began to exercise greater sway over the star until, when the masses became equal, the planet was swinging the sun in an orbit as much as the sun was swinging the planet in an orbit. Still the sun disintegrated its mass away until the planet was the primary and the sun the satellite. A typical Ptolemaic system it was.

About this time a meteor from outer space struck the planet, setting off a fire of atomic energy. The intense heat thus generated vaporized the planet, which became Sirius as we know it today. This theory may be applied to any star that has a white dwarf companion.

Emile E. Greenleaf, Jr.,
1303 Mystery Street,
New Orleans, 19, La.

Mr. Greenleaf evidently forgot he was going to come back to Churchward and his two civilizations and mailed this letter out without further reference, but we have not deleted the mention, because we have some observations to make concerning it. As for this theory of the white dwarf suns, we can only say **COULD BE**, just as we have to all of Shaver's amazing revelations. Regarding Churchward, his books use the material he gathered to forward the theory that life began on Earth, that man was created "full-blown" on the continent Mu, which he has quite substantially proved sank into the sea in the world's greatest catastrophe. But many times in his search he ran into glyphs which seemed to refer to something other than Mu, and earlier, and from other worlds. This being a subject much too hard to prove, and besides, so vast that he could only lose himself in it (and further, cause the scientific world to laugh even more than it has at his work), he chose to ignore such discoveries when they cropped up. But, we can give one example—his reference to the vignette of the goddess Maat sitting on the

two-sided square, and dispensing wisdom (truth) and justice. He found in this Egyptian vignette from the "Book of the Dead" the symbols of Mu, and listed them all—then proceeded to ignore the objects shown in the hands of the goddess! These objects are the telam (used to give proof of a criminal's guilt) and the so-called "cepter" of authority of the Egyptian leaders, with its "dewir" on the bottom end, which Shaver claims is simply a "key" or lever used to operate the ray machines of the caves. Since crimes were a result of detrimental forces in the brain, thus warping thought, crime was not punished—but the brain was cleaned of its detrimental deposits of the heavy metals, and this was done by means of the rays from the machines. At one point in Mr. Shaver's first book, he mentions that the "creator" of man had many names, and he lists them. One of the names in his list is "Titon," and a great many people worshipped the "Titons!" Churchward chooses to say the "Titons" were not separate entities, but just another name for the "Four Forces," which created the universe at the behest of "The Nameless One" (the deity) who gave the Seven Commands that resulted in everything. Prior to Churchward's Mu, which extends back to 50,000 plus years (possibly 200,000, he says), was the era of the Titons and Atlans; and their battle with Zeti and flight to another world occurred before Mu! Churchward had the proof in his grasp, and he rejected it—but not without good reason, and we can forgive him for that. Modern scientists reject his geology, and thus reject all his discoveries. That is sheer bias and idiocy. It may be, though, that had Churchward accepted the "Titoni" for what they are, geology as he read it would have been "accurate" in the eyes of today's geologists!—Ed.

TELONIUM PLATES EXIST!

Sirs:

Does Mr. Shaver remember these: Ashantius, Aluncia, Olentia, Melenthus, Allonia, Adakalanthe, Illanthia—and many others? Illanthia was a master of the second age of Lemuria.

If you will go to (place deleted) they are holding some of the imperishable records of which you speak.

Bee J. E. Leeds,
(address deleted)

We have launched an investigation of this amazing letter, almost all of which we have deleted for several reasons, one of which concerns our personal safety, and perhaps that of the writer. Altogether, we received three letters claiming they knew of the existence of Shaver's telonium plates—one mentioned Italy, which we can't check, at least now; another said Moses got most of Genesis from them, and this one, which named a definite place in this country! We are (glibly, perhaps) taking steps to confirm, or prove it untrue.—Ed.

DISCUSSIONS



AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers.

Everybody is welcome to contribute. Benign and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

WE'VE LOST A FRIEND

AS WE began to prepare this final portion of *Amazing Stories*, we received the sad news that David Wright O'Brien was killed in action December 11 over Germany while in the performance of his duty as bombardier of a B-17. According to reports Dave was one of two of the crew unable to bail out, because of their position in the nose of the craft. It was an ironical bit of fate that O'Brien, ordinarily a waist gunner was shifted to bombardier when the original bombardier was lost.

Your editor has always considered O'Brien the most talented discovery he has made since he began his editing career eight years ago. O'Brien was a nephew of the famous and beloved Farnsworth Wright, who so ably edited that unique magazine, *Weird Tales* until his own tragic death. In addition, O'Brien, together with William F. McGovern was one of the best friends we ever had. To be a friend of O'Brien was to be a friend of McGovern since the two were inseparable pals.

The readers of this and other magazines do not realize the real extent of O'Brien's genius for fiction writing, because they have been unaware of the fact that he not only made his own name a top ranking favorite with the readers, but gained an equal recognition with several other names. When we lost O'Brien we lost also Duncan Farnsworth, John York Cabot, Clee Garson, Bruce Dennis, Richard Varden and others. He averaged more than 50,000 words a month for years, and thus many names were necessary.

After joining the air force he wrote more than 150,000 words, the only writer to accomplish such a feat. He was an indefatigable worker, and snatched time even during flights to pencil down a line or two. He loved to write, and wrote with his heart. None of his readers will ever forget such stories as "Mr. Hibbard's Hat", "The Man The World Forgot", "The Place Is Familiar", and dozens of others, not to forget his classic "Truth is a Plague" which was included in the anthology by Phil Stong, "Other Worlds."

Personally your editor has suffered a feeling of loss that cannot be equalled. O'Brien, McGovern and Palmer had become almost a legendary trio wherever authors gathered, because of their esca-

pades. It was a favorite stunt of the trio to get themselves well plastered, and then two would collaborate to place the third (and most inebricated) on a train bound for a distant point. Generally the ticket was purchased with his own money. Your editor remembers being shipped to Cleveland one Christmas night—and also remembers shipping O'Brien to the same city in retaliation months later.

Standing on our mantelpiece is a bottle of wine purchased for us the last time he saw us before going overseas. Standing beside it is a bottle of Scotch we bought and promised to open when he returned. Neither bottle will ever be opened. They will serve as a constant memento of one of the best writers and best friends we ever had. Someday, in another life we'll meet again; and then we'll drink their counterparts. Until then, cheerio, Dave old boy! We'll be seeing you.

GRAVITY IS A PUSH

Sirs:

In the March issue of *Amazing Stories* you made mention of my pamphlet on the nature of space, gravitation, etc. It seems that some readers have confused my theory, which is based on the theory of relativity and modern physics with Mr. Shaver's gravitation theory as outlined in his story "I Remember Lemuria!". The only points of resemblance between the two theories is that in both cases gravitation is assumed to be in the nature of an inward push toward the center of the earth instead of a pull, as is popularly supposed. Otherwise my theory is not at all like the theory of Mr. Shaver.

J. P. Kayne.
Room 517,
4518 Clarendon Ave.,
Chicago, 40, Ill.

Your theory, Mr. Kayne, has been read by us, and is intensely interesting, so you can hardly blame us for mentioning it—but only because of the one fact that you maintain gravity is a push, which tied in with Mr. Shaver. It was our fault, of course, that readers assumed you supported Mr. Shaver, which is not the case. We realize that yours is an exact mathematical theory, and is not to be taken in the same light with Shaver's more fantastic theories. Therefore, we correct this im-

precision heretofore, and repeat only that your pamphlet is worthy of a reading by any of our readers, most of whom are vitally interested in scientific advancement and in the theories of those who have put much work and time into proposing them. Many thanks for your article on mathematics, which appears on pages 187 and 200.—En.

SCIENCE FICTION FILMS

Sirs:

I am a reader of your mag and, up until a short time ago, a satisfied one. But! (Here comes the brain storm.)

Why not start a campaign to flood the movie studios with letters demanding more science fiction films?

By doing this you could

1. Increase the number of science fiction fans.
2. Have a chance to use some of the S. F. masterpieces, giving the writers a chance.
3. Use any story that has been published by your mag to get more publicity.

Decide on one studio and then ask the readers to swamp them with letters.

I'm sure any studio that gets enough letters will agree to produce such a picture or series of pictures. That's about all.

Hugh A. McDonald
101 Dayton Terr.
Newark, N. J.

Well, readers, it's up to you. Why not write letters to all the studios? Those of you who like science fiction films. We'd like to see 'em too, and we'll be the first to write. Maybe it will help, who can tell!—En.

TECHNICAL ERRORS

Sirs:

I noticed in your "Discussions" a letter by Pvt. J. R. Gregory and was struck by the number of points which he brought up in regard to wrong parts of the author's stories. In my opinion, although your stories have, as a whole, gotten better in these last issues, at the same time, there seems to be more of these technical points which are either ignored or misinterpreted.

In this story, these undersea people attack the submarine, taken a member of the sub's crew opens the outer hatch. Now the point is that if the submarine were at any depth at all, this would be an impossible feat of strength, because of the tremendous pressure. Even so, admitting that the sub was not down far enough to make this impossible when the hatch was opened, the water would not come in over the edge of the hatch well, as shown in the picture on page 12-13, but would come down in a solid stream. In an account of the sinking of the U. S. sub, Squabs, the author said that a stream of water came down the air intake valve, eighteen inches wide, in a solid beam, knocking him off his feet. How much more water would come down the sub's

main hatch! Also, it seemed in the story that it took a long time for the sub to fill with water.

Then at the end of the story, the second German sub fired five torpedoes at the destroyer. This might have been necessary to end the story by ending Alita's half life, but it isn't at all logical that a sub would fire even one torpedo at a destroyer, with capital ships and merchant ships in sight. Yet they did. This rather spoils the whole thing.

In the story, "War Prisoners of Renault Island," Janito claims that the Martians will be policed in order that they may never be able to start another war. Then, in another few moments, we find out that there is only one space-ship left on Uranus, and that that is going to be destroyed. How then are the Uranians going to police the Martians. It heats me how anyone can claim that all of Wilcox's stories are no good. Admittedly, they are generally off the track, and occasionally there is one that doesn't come out good, but most of them are. I think that "Invasion Dust" was the best story of the December issue. "Battling Bert" and "Truk Island" came in close seconds. The play of the actual story of Amelia Earhart, and a suggestion of what really happened is an interesting one, especially in view of the fact that many people have long thought that something like this had happened, at least in regard to being taken by the Japs. There is one point of the story that left me confused, however. Where did the sun and ocean come from. If the ocean sank with them where did ours come from, and at all odds, where did the sun come from?

Something that strikes me as strange; most fans seem to prefer Weinbaum to Lovecraft or Merritt. For that matter, Lovecraft shouldn't be mentioned with regard to STF, because he is strictly Fantasy, at least his best stuff.

Guy Trucano, Jr.
Box 1094

Dickinson, N. Dak.

We bow our heads in shame—you are perfectly right about these technical errors. However, it may be that these drowned people, being alive by some weird, unknown power, also had some unknown power that would enable them to open anything. As for Submarine Torpedo tactics, there you have us. We don't know from nothing! Personally, we'd shoot on sight, if we were the Captain!—En.

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NO PAPER!

Sirs:

I have just finished the December, 1944, *AMAZING*. I found "War Criminals of Remus Island" to be most enjoyable. I would not say it was a great story, but it kept one interested from start to finish, and it was full of action. The rest of the stories I did not care for.

I do not know why Doc Wilcox is considered such a good writer. He has written some fairly good stories, but I do not think anyone will care to read his stories 20 or 30 years from now. He does not have what E. R. Burroughs puts into his stories, and E.R.B.'s tales are as much in demand today as when he wrote them, if you don't believe me, try and buy some of his Mars, Venus, or Pellucidar books. If you do get them they are rather expensive.

Sometime ago there was a suggestion made that you publish some of the most popular tales from past *Amazings* in pocket-size books. I like the idea, but you better get started, because I noticed other publishers are doing it now. Some of A. Merritt's stories have been published and also collections of fantasy and science-fiction have been issued.

Walter John Sargent
3331 De Forest Drive
Cincinnati 9, Ohio

Your suggestion on pocket books is fine, but we just don't have paper! After the war, anything can happen. Right now, we'll just have to wait.—En.

HE'S IN THE ARMY

Sirs:

I am writing you to find out whatever became of an author named Clark South. He wrote two good stories a couple of months apart from each other. They were excellent reading. I can't remember whether they appeared in FA or AS so I'm writing to you. I would appreciate it if you could let me know what happened to him.

J. J. Roth
1020 So. 23d St.
Omaha, 51, Nebr.

Clark South is in the army, and last heard from in Richmond, Virginia. He'll certainly write for us when the war's over, though—and you can take our word and his for that.—En.

WE'D HAVE TRIPPED TOO!

Sirs:

Now what kind of a German logician was that? I refer, of course to "A Most Ingenious Paradox" in your December issue. If he had been alert and of a logical mind, he would have noted that the old man who said he was Zeno could not even state the paradox correctly, and also had mixed it up rather thoroughly with another paradox. The paradoxes are as follows:

Achilles must first reach the spot where the tortoise was originally. But by that time the tor-

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1. Mr. Bradbury will appear often! 2. Paul has on this desk a half-dozen SWELL paintings! 3. How about the cover this month? 4. More Lemuria this month! 5. We can do no more than continue our readable type! 6. We intend to keep Discussions interesting, and this time should be an example. 7. We're being very careful about smokes and drinks and things! 8. Virgil Finlay is in this issue with a SWELL one!—Ed.

TRUE CONFESSION!

Sirs:

I am disgusted! Of all the mean, rotten tricks, this one is tops. I have just finished the December '44 issue of AMAZING STORIES. In the story by C. A. Baldwin, "War Criminals of Renault Island," there is an illustration depicting a phase of the story. THAT picture awakened a faint glimmer of recognition. Hastily tearing through my not complete back files of AS Bingo! There it was staring me in the face. Under a different story, under a different sub-title there it was! Way back in November, 1940, the same picture by Krupa. Now, I ask you, is that fair to your honest, loving readers? Is it? Not a line changed. Nothing! By the way the story in the Nov., 1940, issue was "Revolt on the Tenth World," by Edmond Hamilton. I doubt whether or not this letter will be printed, but I hope it is. On the whole with a few mistakes(?) AMAZING STORIES is a swell magazine, except that there are too-o-o many stories concerning the war. We get enough of that in the newspapers, over the radio and on the screen. Please, let's have a few stories that are truly AMAZING, that have nothing to do with today's war.

Arthur Brown
 4125 Rogers St.
 Los Angeles 33, Calif.

At the last minute our artist fell down on us, and we faced a deadline with no illustration. Yet, we tried to pull a fast one! You certainly are an observing cat! War! We're soft-peddling it now, or have you noticed?—Ed.

GIANTS?

Sirs:

After reading "I Remember Lemuria!" by Richard Shaver, I have decided that we can answer the question "could it be true or not?" ourselves.

If you can tell me whether or not human beings ever attained the height and size described by Shaver (on this Earth) and if they did, were their mental powers in accordance? If you can find scientific proof that humans once grew to this great size and that their mental powers were in accordance, then I for one can hardly doubt that our forefathers left the Earth.

Why can't Shaver remember where he placed those plates and how to build some of those machines he describes? He is supposed to have a

super-wonderful memory.

Bascom G. Long
Arlington, Va.

Col. James Churchward, in his three books, produces ancient writings (some of them 35,000 years old) from Indian and Tibetan monasteries, which tell of "giant" men. However, he ventures the opinion that the translations are in error. We have several instances of giants in the Bible. Can we accept them as fiction? The temple at Baalbeck, Greece, is built of colossal stones, some of which weigh as much as 1,200 tons! How were these moved? There are only two answers—by levitation, such as was described in Shaver's story, or by Titans. Churchward proved that Athens, before it was destroyed by a cataclysm, was built in an era 35,000 years ago. But he says the Baalbeck ruins were less ancient, being built after the mountains were formed, or about 10,000 years ago. We personally believe they were built as much as 50,000 years ago, before the mountains came into being. Giants? Recently jaegers were discovered which came from men 30 feet tall! And a tooth was discovered which might have come from a man 60 feet tall! Giants? Yes, there is much evidence, but the trouble is, scientists, and even such pseudoscientists as Churchward do not WANT to believe it. Churchward tells us that the "gods" had many names, (he called them "forces") and among those names he lists "Titans." Ancient Naacal writings tell of Ra-ma, ruler of Mu, Son of the Sun (symbolic of the Deity) who lived 10,000 years—and of Horus, the Egyptian, who was a man, and not a god, as Egyptologists would have us believe, who lived 17,000 years. Churchward says this must be a sub-translation. Must it? (one man, or dynasty?)

As we've revealed now, Mr. Shaver's memory is not memory at all, but actual contact with the caves, and reading of what are called "thought records." These thought records do not tell where the plates are—but our readers do! Three have mentioned them, and we are investigating. As for machines—we have in our possession numerous descriptions and details for such machines, and we are NOT neglecting them! You'll hear more about this!—Em

ABOUT "EXD"

Sies:

I have tried to find fault with the theory which Mr. Shaver explained in "I Remember Lemuria!" There it states that gravity is caused by the friction of "exd" on matter as it falls to Earth. It was stated also that light was slowed down to 184,271 m.p. sec. (approximately) by friction of the light with exd. What is exd? Why hasn't it been discovered lately with all the scientific discoveries? The answer is that they have discovered it, and it's not too new. Have you ever read about "cosmic rays"? Yes, cosmic rays, the thing science knows so little about.

It is known that a ray of light is bent when

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passing close to a star. Science says gravity causes it. We know gravity is falling end, or so Shaver says. From that we draw the conclusion that light is not only slowed down to a constant speed, but can be bent from its path by moving end.

What causes end to fall if it is gravity? The attraction end has for end. Scientists know that the core of the Earth is very dense probably resulting from the accumulation of end after it falls to Earth. A person then wonders why some of the end would not fall up, as there is plenty of it left in space. End once stopped in matter must drag the matter with it to a certain extent due to the great friction end and matter have.

Some dwarf stars are so dense that one cubic inch weighs one ton. The companion of Sirius is such a star. Another is known to weigh 3 tons per cubic inch. This is more than likely caused by the accumulation of end after millions of years of existence.

If end is cosmic rays, why are there more cosmic rays the farther away from Earth you go when at the same time matter gets lighter? True, but far above the Earth the rays (end) have not encountered much matter and thus are falling at a faster rate, and inertia then prevents end from dragging it down. That explains why things fall faster and faster. While this is going on, some of the rays are stopped, thus there are less rays the nearer Earth you go. The amount of end falling on the Earth is small in comparison with its weight, and matter increases in weight very little.

Cosmic rays are highly penetrating radiations striking the Earth from everywhere in outer space. Doesn't that fit end?

Courted Peterson,
Willson Beach,
Tillamook, Ore.

You have tried to find fault, but apparently you found only corroboration! Your letter astounds us, for several reasons which we won't go into here, but we can say that you've presented quite a logical case. If end exists, it **COULD** be cosmic rays. Personally, we can't say. But we are going to do a lot of thinking about it!—Ed.

SAW IT IN THE PAPER

Sirs:

A friend of mine gave me a Chicago paper and I stumbled on the item and got a good laugh—sent it to a friend who said she believe it! I ordered a copy of your magazine from California and it arrived—the cover nearly knocked me over—I can't read Shaver's fiction, but I can't read Burroughs—all pulps put me to sleep. However, I am interested in the psychology back of Shaver, whatever it is.

I do not think it is racial memory. I believe this to be a clear case of obsession. Whenever he was during those years of absence he was given a post-hypnotic suggestion that he was in a cave,

etc., etc. Sometimes Muian Mion speaks, sometimes he speaks—two entities—the one from another plane. Mion may have some information that is correct, again he may be an ex-pulp writer having his fun.

About the Lemurian language. In that strange volume *Oshipe*, Psi is given as the continent that sank in the Pacific—it was the mother continent. People spread from there to Egypt and South America, hence the pyramids in both places, the similarity of words now and then. In *Oshipe*, which was written through psychic means, the Panic language is given. You might compare it with Mion's.

There is only one way that you can ever get at what is behind all this and that is through a Life Reading from Mr. Cayce of Virginia Beach, Va., on Mr. Shaver, with Mr. Shaver's consent, of course. The trouble is that Mr. Cayce tried to help too many people and is ill—he was dated through 1945 when he had to quit. When he can begin again is problematical. In many of the Life Readings, we learn that those in prominent positions today are mostly men who were prominent in Atlantis—he has considerable information on Atlantis. Most of his readings are physical diagnoses and 100% correct as I can attest.

I believe him to be the most remarkable man alive today—I suppose you have read about him in "There Is a River" by Segrue. I sure would like to know what he says about Shaver.

I wish you luck in checking up on the scientific items given and compliment you on being open-minded enough to go into it as you have.

Mrs. H. M. Graham

Box 14

Ruidoso, New Mexico.

We have tried to get a volume of *Oshipe*, but have failed. Can any of our readers supply a copy for our growing library on Lemuria and kindred subjects? Your information on Mr. Cayce is interesting—and we appreciate it. No matter what the source, we don't intend to overlook any possibilities in tracking this great mystery down!—Ea.

REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM

Sims:

Please put me down with those who regard Richard S. Shaver's various theories as completely unscientific and unfounded on any known facts. Since only his "mantong" language has been disclosed to any extent, I wish to say it is the best generalization without meaning I have seen in a long time. Compare the following Lemurian analysis of modern and coined words with his so-called Lemurian words. I can furnish as many impossibly "Lemurian" words which do obey his rules as he can possible "Lemurian" words: JIVE—generate sex appeal.

FORD—a fecund source of dangerous disintegrating energy force.

HEPCAT—A human who integrates the motive animal power.



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fornia.)

GERMANY—generates the horrible energy in
man, animal, and child.

But you can try this for yourself. I see no
point in continuing such a reductio ad absurdum.
I would appreciate a copy of the forthcoming
scientific monograph on Mr. Shaver's scientific
theories having some pretensions to scientific
learning myself. I am a graduate chemist, an
industrial chemist by profession, and a member of
the American Chemical Society, Society of Ameri-
can Military Engineers, and Psi Chi (national
honorary psychological society). Have also
studied electrical engineering, radio, and mete-
orology, by army work being in these last three
fields. I warn you that I am already prejudiced
against Mr. Shaver by the unscientific nature of
what has been so far disclosed of his theories.

Enc 4, William Copulsky

Military Secret

U. S. A.

Okay, we'll take two more words, the German
KINDER: "It motivates the ego of the child with
horrible detrimental energy"; the German
KRIEG: "kinetic horror I energetically generate."
It is only coincidence that the Germans have al-
ways taught their children war; that they always
reverted war as a means to their end (and we hope
this is literal!), and Germany has always caused
war among man, animal and child indiscrimi-
nately. It may be quite true that Shaver has de-
vised a perfect "generality." **THAT'S WHAT
WE'RE TRYING TO FIND OUT!** Beginning
with a "prejudiced" mind can give us only one
possible answer, a "prejudiced" answer. That's
what's wrong with scientists today—they have
some prejudices (many of which are **WRONG**)
and they are stuck with them. But since science
is science, and we want to make it correct, we are
delving into this thing for **ACCEPTED** scientific
facts, and trying to dig out facts which science
will **ACCEPT**. So let's not "approach" the sub-
ject with our minds made up that it's "all well"
to begin with. Taking that word, **krieg**, even the
GRAMMAR is typically German in our transla-
tion.

However, we completely agree with you on
the necessity of **PROVING** things, and we hope
to be able to track Mr. Shaver's language key
back to its beginning. Recognized experts will have
to do it for us, naturally, but we've got to hurdle
their "prejudice" first, and that's a job!—Eud.

MARCH ISSUE, IN TOTO

Sirs:

1—Covers: Front, as always, good. The fore-
ground always packs the punch, but the back-

ground is equally important. Maybe a bit more background sometime? Back, excellent! I shall keep warm this winter just by looking at it. And what a pleasure to see Paul again!

2—Inside pic: Short and to the point, good!

3—Stories: Rated as follows:

Moon Of Double Trouble—that story was in technicolor, 'twas so vivid! Yes, it seemed to have a faint similarity to other yarns in the past, but this was a gem. *I Remember Lemuria*—reluctantly I put this yarn in second place. Seems to me there is an awful lot of pushing to impress the fans. Some fans don't like being pushed. Not this one. However, the story is good, no denying, and you can easily coast along on succeeding Lemurias. *Valley Of Delirium*—another gem. *Come From Yesterday*—very good. *The Lying Lie Detector*—tassup for interchange with *Come From Yesterday*. *The Markon's Masterpiece*. *Dr. MacDonough's*. *Etc.* *Twist My Turbine*. *Now Alive!*—why the exclamation mark. 4—Articles: Excellent!

5—Summation: A well-balanced magazine.

Hugh W. Gunn,
Ste. 2 Sparring Apts.,
217 Sherbrooke St.,
Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Thanks for your rating. It is our first comment from Canada since our magazine is again circulated in your country.—Ed.

THREE SUGGESTIONS

Sirs:

In reference to Richard S. Shaver's manuscript, "I Remember Lemuria?", may I offer the following suggestions:

1—If Mr. Shaver's memories are complete, he should be able to find or to direct the finding of those metal "record plates" which he as Mutan Mion hid. Would it be practical for AMAZING STORIES to consider outfitting an expedition for this purpose or for the purpose of finding the lost cities of Miu; putting Mr. Shaver in charge as a guide?

2—You state in one of the footnotes that perhaps these plates because of geologic changes might never be found. Have you considered the possibility that those famous "gold" plates dug up at Connors, New York by Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon sect about 100 years ago might have been a copy of Mutan Mion's message to future man?

3—In reference to prolonged life: A recent magazine article (1943, I believe) by a beauty expert-chief gave directions for attaining youthful zest and appearance something as follows:—"Take the glands (thyroid, etc.) of freshly slaughtered animals, chop finely and cook in a pressure cooker to a broth; result of taking, restoration of youthful appearance, zest, etc." Also I had the honor in 1938 of talking to Dr. Dubin (one of the discoverers of vitamins) who told me that laboratory experiments with vitamin B complex on rabbits, etc. by giving optimal (large overdose) doses had increased the life span twice; and there was no reason why it shouldn't work



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on man (does not yet established, also see work on the anti-grey hair vitamin, vitamin K, etc., more recent).

4—I am informed that there has been for some time a treatment available to prolong human life by a combination of vitamins and hormones and glandular extracts and that this treatment has been restricted by its discoverer, a New York doctor, "to those worthy of having their lives extended perhaps 60 years." Will you check on this?

As one interested in people living the "more abundant life" may I offer my sincere congratulations for this fine article.

Milton G. Eland,
 3800 Speyten Duyvel Parkway,
 New York 63, N. Y.

1—Yes we are considering an expedition, and Mr. Shaver is receptive to the idea of leading it. Your editor is making a trip to New York this month in relation to just such plans.

2—Smith never produced those plates, nor showed them to anyone, and their existence is strongly doubted. Since his death, searches have been conducted without success in swearing them.

3—The influence of vitamins, glandular substances, hormones, etc. is recognized, but prolong life only in the sense that they improve health. They do nothing to eliminate the cause of death, the radioactives in the body cells.

4—We are unaware of the existence of such a treatment, or of any doctor who has made such a statement. Can any of our readers substantiate this, giving us his name?—Ed.

MR. SHAVER'S NAME . . .

Sirs:

I have been reading Mr. Shaver's Lemurian article. I am a firm believer in reincarnation, and any reader of occult literature can fit Mr. Shaver's Lemurian life right into the pattern of human development, even to the fact that he himself was (is) a mutant and so.

Also, try this: take his present name, Richard Sharpe Shaver, put the letters up and down, and put the Mantong alphabet meaning beside each letter, and you see what you get. You can almost say "horror piled on horror" which could mean one of two things. Either the fight with Zei so impressed itself on his mind (?) that he brought it with him into his present reincarnation, or he, in his remembered knowledge of those deadly things carries a potentiality for that kind of horror or destruction. I am not sufficiently advanced in the occult to analyze another's path, but I have seen part of my own, and fully believe that the man speaks the truth.

In California there is a Mt. Lassen, and I have been told that at times voices are heard from the interior of the mountain, and that at such times persons approaching too near are covered with a shower of stones in size from peas to your fist. I have not been there, but have talked to at least a dozen people who have, and people of that

section refer to it freely as the entrance to another "world" and a different and strange people.

Irene M. Steen,
General Delivery,
Clewiston, Fla.

Freely translated, by means of his alphabet, Mr. Shaver's name reads "I see horrible human animal with detrimental power". If you bear this in mind when reading the story in this issue you will be amazed by the coincidence—but we can't take it for more than that. Mr. Shaver has seen horrible human animals who have great detrimental powers, and he tells us of them in this issue. How his name could have foretold that, we can't fathom. We can regard it only as an interesting thing such as Bob Ripley likes to present to his readers.

Your information about Mr. Lassen is interesting. Can our readers add anything to this? Can we dig up some FACTS about Mr. Lassen? This magazine will collect all such information sent us by readers and present it in these columns. Who knows what weird things can be dug up!—Ed.

REVOLUTIONIZES

Sirs:

I have just finished reading your latest issue, and what an issue it is. Whether "I Remember Lemuria" is true or not, it certainly revolutionizes not only science-fiction, but science as well. The alphabet you composed, has to my amazement worked in French. After this I tried various experiments in different languages, and it works in Russian as well as in Greek.

I have made science-fiction my hobby for many years and I must say that of all magazines you are on top. The March 1945 issue is the best one I have ever laid my eyes on.

Robin Fast, D.S.F., D.D.F., F.R.S.
Larchmont Acres,
Larchmont, N. Y.

We hope we've duplicated the feat in this issue, Mr. Fast!—Ed.

HAS INFORMATION

Sirs:

I have been waiting for such a story as "I Remember Lemuria?" by Richard S. Shaver. If possible, I would like his address. I believe that I have some information which would be helpful but would like to write to him directly.

Lt. R. F. Needham,
Sec "H", Class 44-4-J,
Hendricks Field,
Sebring, Fla.

So many people have asked for direct contact with Mr. Shaver that it would be impossible for him to correspond with them all. However, if you have any vital information, he can be reached by writing directly care of this magazine. Why not write us, too?

With this we must end this department, without publishing hundreds of other letters. However, we urge every reader to write who "knows" anything!—Ed.

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MICA SAILBOAT OF MERCURY

By HENRY GADE

Millions of years ago Mercury might have supported a form of life capable of building the sailing vessel shown in the painting on the back cover of this issue

TODAY, scientists tell us Mercury is a planet which probably does not revolve on its axis more than once for each circuit of the sun, and therefore always presents the same face to the sun.

Because of this, one side of Mercury is constantly at a temperature of more than 540° F. (the side facing the sun) and near absolute zero on the other side.

Therefore, we can be sure that today there are no oceans of any kind existing on which a ship could sail. On one hand they would be vaporized, and on the other, frozen solid.

Too, today the planet has no atmosphere, or at the very most, an extremely thin layer of gases incapable of supporting life even in the restricted twilight area where the temperature would be a livable 100° F. This area would be devoid of seas also, since any moisture that reached the dark side as vapor, would never return because it would remain there in a frozen condition—and eventually all of the moisture would accumulate there.

But let us look many millions of years into the past, when Mercury was a young world. We can give it an atmosphere, much as our Moon must have had at one time. We can give it a greater period of rotation (even three or four times what it is today would be sufficient) and we would have a planet very capable of supporting seas and oceans—in fact one where such oceans would be a certainty because of the presence of a dense cloud blanket.

Here again, however, we would have terrible heat, perhaps so much so that ordinary human life would not exist. We might eventually find insect life developing. The final result of that sort of evolution is pictured on the back cover.

The atmosphere would be chemically poison to a human, and the chemicals in its composition might make the "sky" appear to be some fantastic color, for instance, the weird orange-red shown in Mr. Settles' painting.

The sea itself might be a "chemical" sea, formed of fifty percent water, and fifty percent acids of various types.

Such a planet would be conducive of the formation of types of rock such as quartz, crystals of various kinds, mica, asbestos, etc. It would be from materials like these that our "Mercurians" would build their ship.

Because of the existence of prevailing winds, due to the great temperature changes of this world so close to the sun, the Mercurians would decide to take advantage of this motive power, and their ship would be a sailboat.

They would build the ship of acid-resistant crystals, cut into sheets and joined tightly, with seams calked with tars. These tars would not be resinous in nature, but produced by gummy wriths drilled down to the short-lived vegetable era of its comparative "carboniferous" period. Pressures to produce coal would never be brought into being on Mercury, due to its rapid cooling and shortness of its eras. The coal would be in the form of a gooey peat much like some of our poorer grades of soft coal. But from this coal a tar substance could be taken to form an acid-proof seal for the crystal-sheet ships.

Our sailboat would be equipped with a stone mast, and its sail would be large sheets of a mica-like substance, cut perhaps a half-inch thick. These sheets would be fitted together by slotting, and could be adjusted to allow for changes in speed. They would fold up somewhat like an oriental fan.

The craft itself would ride high in the water, and be equipped with outriggers to prevent capsizing. There might be no oceans, so travel would be along narrow channels, like fjords, and through tortuous areas where danger from rocks and obstructions would be great. Travel over shallow water would necessitate a shallow draft.

The extreme lightness of the craft, however, would allow for great maneuverability, and we could expect the Mercurians to be rather acrobatic sailors. The ship would carry a crew of thirty or so, and perhaps accommodations for a hundred passengers, or approximately twenty-five tons of freight.

The slow rotation of Mercury would bring them to a portion of the sea that would be frozen, and here the ship would become a giant sled which would travel by sail just as it did while a boat.

Thus it would be possible for this craft to travel over almost the entire planet, in its two mediums, and we could expect the Mercurians to depend upon it as their sole medium of travel. Across the ice and water of Mercury, an average speed of perhaps twenty-five miles per hour might be maintained. And during such a voyage, the travelers might experience a very hot summer and a very cold winter!

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CAN FIGURES BE FASCINATING?

(Concluded from page 187)

3 million metric tons; and dividing the last figure into our first figure with 14 zeros we get a value of 33.3 million years which is the length of time such a quantity of sugar would last the present number of inhabitants of the U. S. at the present rate of consumption. Does this give you a better idea of what 10 to the 24th power (the number of molecules in an ounce of water) can mean?

Or, let's take another tack. The number of grams in a metric ton is one million. A gram of pure water equals one cubic centimeter. I have found that loose, granulated sugar has a density of about $1\frac{1}{4}$ times water, but for close packing in a huge mass I would take twice water density. Then the above original quantity of sugar, if in the form of a huge cube, would contain 5 times 10 to the 19th power cubic centimeters. Taking the cube root of this quantity, I get 3.60 million centimeters. There are about 162,000 centimeters to a mile and dividing the former by the latter I get a value of 22.8 miles as the length of each side of the imaginary cube which also contains about 11,800 cubic miles, which I think is fairly correct, unless I have made a slip-up.

Now what do you think? Can figures be fascinating?

—J. P. Kayne



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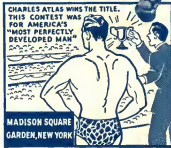
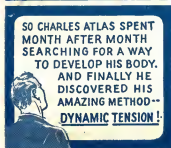
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